



U.S. visa applicants now required to disclose social media platforms, among other information, on visa application forms

By Jason M. Gerrol

On May 31, 2019, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) added new questions to the Forms DS-160/DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application, and Form DS-260, Immigrant Visa Application, including a question requiring disclosure of all social media user name(s) used within the previous five years.

The new questions are being implemented as a result of President Trump's March 6, 2017 executive order calling for increased screening and vetting procedures of U.S. visa applicants. However, opponents of the new questions have raised myriad concerns, including concerns over privacy violations and how the information collected will be utilized, possible First Amendment violations and the potential for discouraging otherwise qualified applicants from seeking a U.S. visa.

What new questions have been added to the forms?

The [Form DS-160](#), which has largely replaced the previously used Form DS-156, is required of any applicant for a U.S. non-immigrant visa (e.g., H-1B, B-1/2, etc.), whereas the [Form DS-260](#) is required of anyone applying for an immigrant visa (i.e., a "green card") from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.

The Form DS-160/DS-156 and Form DS-260 (collectively, "application forms") require visa applicants to disclose information such as biographical information, travel history and educational background, as well as information regarding prior immigration violations, arrests, etc. and are used by DOS officers to verify the identity of the visa applicant and determine eligibility for the particular non-immigrant or immigrant visa being applied for.

Effective May 31, 2019, visa applicants will now need to disclose any social media platform(s) he/she has used in the previous five years, and provide their username(s) for those platforms. The application forms will not require the visa applicant to provide passwords for these accounts.

In addition, visa applicants will need to provide a list of e-mail addresses and phone numbers used in the previous five years. While an applicant may insert "unknown" in response to certain questions, doing so may only result in visa processing delays.

Will the new questions result in visa application delays?

It is unclear at this time whether the new questions will result in visa application delays. However, to avoid possible delays, visa applicants should be sure to answer all questions fully and accurately. Failure to disclose information on the application forms may be deemed a misrepresentation, which is grounds for finding a visa applicant inadmissible.

In addition, visa applicants should ensure their social media profiles are up-to-date, including ensuring employment details are consistent with their intended purpose for traveling to the U.S.

Finally, while the application forms do not require the disclosure of social media passwords, visa applicants should nevertheless be mindful that any public social media post may result in further questioning by DOS officers, or possibly Customs and Border Protection during the course of a [border search of the traveler's electronic device](#).

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