

New U.S. Visa Fee Set to Take Effect in 2026 Under Federal Spending Bill

A new Visa Integrity Fee outlined in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will apply to non-immigrant visa applicants starting in 2026, with added costs and administrative changes that could affect travel between the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean.

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Starting next year, non-citizens wishing to travel to the United States will have to pay more to obtain their visas, a provision in the recently-passed federal spending bill that could negatively affect Virgin Islanders.

Large numbers of the VI population immigrated to the territory from elsewhere in the Caribbean, leaving friends and relatives behind to forge a new life in the land of opportunity.

Over the years, this has resulted in a rich and complex network of relationships between Virgin Islanders and the rest of the region, supported by strong intra-regional travel. Changes to the transportation industry over time – the shift from Puerto Rico to Miami as the Caribbean “gateway” to the United States, for example – have resulted in little change to the flow of regional visitors to the territory.

However, starting in 2026, friends and family members of the immigrant population of the Virgin Islands will be required to pay more for non-immigrant United States visas, due to the implementation of a “Visa Integrity Fee” that will be charged to successful applicants. According to the text of the [One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#), the fee will apply to all categories of non-immigrant visa. It will begin at a minimum of \$250, or a higher amount established by the Secretary of Homeland security, and will be pegged to inflation and adjusted annually in each fiscal year to follow.

The fee can be reimbursed upon expiration of the visa if the individual can prove that they complied with all provisions of the non-immigrant visa and left the United States within 5 days of the visa's expiry. If not reimbursed, the money will go into the Treasury's general fund. Fee waivers are not available in this case.

The new fee represents an additional charge separate and above the current \$185 processing fee for non-immigrant visa applications, raising the total cost of a successful visa application to \$435. Applicants who reside in a country with no United States Embassy must also add airline tickets and a night or two of hotel accommodation to the cost.

Travel industry professionals lament that the new fee deals as an additional blow to an already depressed tourism industry. A recent study from the World Travel & Tourism Council revealed that the United States was the only country out of the 184 analyzed that is forecast to have a reduction in international visitor spending in 2025.

“These fees are not reinvested in improving the travel experience but discourage visitation at a time when foreign travelers are already concerned about the welcome experience and high prices,” said Geoff Freeman, president of the U.S. Travel Association. “Raising fees on lawful international visitors amounts to a self-imposed tariff on one of our nation's largest exports: international travel spending,” he continued.

For the Virgin Islands, tourism is unlikely to be significantly impacted; the vast majority of visitors to the territory come from the mainland United States. However, the strain on cross-regional family ties, and the dampening effect on the Bryan administration's efforts to improve intra-regional visitation, will be difficult to avoid.