

Passport Application comments

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed rule regarding changes to passport applications. As an American citizen, I believe it is unnecessary, costly, and will create undue hardship and no gain whatsoever. The government's reasoning for this change is specious, disingenuous, and unkind. It will lead to unnecessary confusion and expense, creating hardship for individual Americans. In direct opposition to the administration's stance on reducing spending, this change will cost money for the government, airlines, and Americans in the way of updating documents and forms, computer coding and testing, and necessitating additional training for airport staff required to handle misaligned federal and state or territorial documents. It is false and misleading to state that the change is "required" by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). No specific ICAO source is cited in the proposed rule because such a rule does not exist! Even if it did, ICAO standards are not automatically binding. Member states, including the U.S., have the sovereign right to implement these standards into

their national regulatory frameworks. The U.S. may also file differences with ICAO when its regulations deviate from international standards. In fact, the U.S. already diverges from ICAO rules in several areas, including safety oversight, medical certification, hazardous materials regulations, differences notifications, and environmental measures. "I was just following orders" falls flat here, as there is precedent for our independent, sovereign action.

In line with the proposed rule's intent, the change will have the U.S. step back from the direction the rest of the world is moving toward. Sixteen other countries offer a third gender option on official national documents: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, India, Malta, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, and Pakistan. The U.S. should be leading or aligning with international norms and not falling behind them into the past.

Let us evaluate each of the four points of consideration listed in the proposed rule one-by-one:

1. Is the proposed information collection necessary for the proper functions of the Department? The Department was already collecting suitable information, and international travel was being

conducted successfully, so there is no "problem being solved" with this proposed change. The information being collected will be less accurate, less useful, and less consistent with Americans' other official documents due to the inconsistencies it creates.

2. Though the estimate of time burden for the proposed collection may be accurate, the inequitable time burden on the targeted population of individual Americans increases, which is generally in opposition to other time burden reduction initiatives the U.S. government has historically taken. Americans with a gender that doesn't align with sex assigned at birth or selecting a hereto allowed third gender option will have an increased administrative burden that is not reflected in the government's estimate. And where is the estimate of cost? The proposed rule mentions cost as a consideration but gives no estimate of the cost for the Department, other government agencies, airlines, or individual Americans. Costs will be incurred at each of these levels.

3. Does the proposed rule "enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected?"

Absolutely not! The proposed change will only create bureaucratic incongruities in official documents.

4. The proposed rule change

purports to "minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology." In contrast, the proposed rule does the opposite of this in several areas. First, it removes the ability of individual Americans to report their own gender, instead consuming government resources to investigate historical documents to supersede reported data with "assigned sex by government" (ASBG). Second, it fully violates the spirit and letter of the Paperwork Reduction Act, which is supposed to make the process of providing information to the government as quick and painless as possible. The broader objectives of the PRA include reducing paperwork burden for individuals, businesses, and other entities, ensuring the greatest possible public benefit from information collected, improving the quality and use of federal information, and minimizing the cost to the federal government for information collection and management. The proposed rule change is contrary to each of these. In conclusion, this proposed rule offers no benefit to the public while simultaneously increasing cost and bureaucratic burden. It is not in the best interests of the American people. It is based on a flawed

premise and will potentially further isolate the U.S. from the international community. The rule seeks only to harm everyday citizens, which should not be a function of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. I urge the Department to abandon this proposal and instead focus on policies that truly benefit the American public.