



# GMS Flash Alert

## Immigration Edition

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# United States - State Department Seeking Visa Applicant Disclosure of Social Media History

In an expansion of the information requested of U.S. visa applicants, the Federal Register posted notices from the U.S. Department of State on March 30, 2018, proposing to add questions for **immigrant and nonimmigrant visa applicants** about social media platforms they used in the past five years.<sup>1</sup> The public has 60 days to comment on the revised procedures. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will subsequently approve or reject the proposal.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Foreign nationals need to be aware the government may soon be able to ask most U.S. visa applicants for their social media details and screen their social media activity. Thus, foreign nationals will need to prepare for the possibility that they will be asked to gather all social media, in addition to travel, work and residence history details before U.S. visa appointments.

The government may seek additional information such as five years of previously used telephone numbers, email addresses, and international travel; whether the applicant has been deported or removed from any country; and whether specified family members have been involved in terrorist activities. These additional background checks and heightened scrutiny could potentially result in visa issuance delays and denials.

## Background

Previously, in May 2017, the OMB approved the State Department's request to collect social media identifiers only when they determined such information was necessary to "confirm identity or conduct more rigorous national security vetting" but only from applicants deemed to pose a potential risk of terrorism.

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## Enhanced Social Media Vetting

This new proposal, supporting the Trump Administration's policy of "extreme vetting" of foreign nationals, if approved, will now require U.S. visa applicants to disclose all social media identities they have used in the past five years, along with phone numbers, email addresses and international travel during the past five years. The administration anticipates that this policy will affect approximately 15 million non-immigrants and immigrants to the United States. According to the State Department, the policy provides exemptions for diplomatic and official visas.

Our office is tracking this matter closely and will provide you with an update in the upcoming weeks.

### FOOTNOTE:

1 See the Federal Register posted notices from the U.S. Department of State on March 30, 2018, [click here](#) for nonimmigrant visas, and [click here](#) for immigrant visas.

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## Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional\* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Canada:



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[www.kpmg.com](http://www.kpmg.com)

[kpmg.com/socialmedia](http://kpmg.com/socialmedia)



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