

Looking Forward to International Visits from Friends and Family in 2016? Better Hope They're Not Dual Nationals of Certain Countries.

Adaptation of article by Joanne Lin, ACLU

Most Americans don't know that Congress is set to pass a law that will make it harder for many Europeans, Asians, Australians, and others to visit the U.S. In response to the November terrorist attacks in Paris, Congress and the White House quickly put together a bill to limit the visa waiver program (VWP), resulting in a new law that allows discrimination against **dual nationals** of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria, who live in VWP countries.

The visa waiver bill being part of the government spending bill could seriously shake up international travel. Starting in 2016, citizens of VWP countries will lose their visa-free travel privileges if they are dual nationals of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria. These changes will affect many dual nationals — even if they have never set foot inside Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria. A German citizen, who has lived in Berlin her entire life, will lose her ability to travel visa-free if her father is an Iranian citizen — even if she herself has never been to Iran. They and their children became German citizens, but under Iranian law, they will never lose their Iranian citizenship — thus making them dual nationals.

Starting in 2016, these German-Iranian dual nationals will need to apply for visitor visas, attend an interview at a U.S. consulate, and pass additional background checks before coming to the U.S. They will need to pass these extra hurdles if they're coming to the U.S. for any visitor purpose — whether to attend a family reunion or tour the Grand Canyon.

The new visa waiver law will prohibit people from coming to the U.S. simply because they're dual nationals of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria and will also strip visa-free privileges from anyone who has traveled to or visited Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria since March 2011. This discrimination based on nationality and **parentage** is wrong and un-American.

The ACLU asks Congress and the White House to fix the discriminatory visa waiver travel restrictions, in order to safeguard America's security without sacrificing civil liberties.

Dual nationals: people who are citizens of two countries

Parentage: the background (ethnic or racial usually) of your parents