



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 12, 2009

Gail L. Pellerin
Santa Cruz County Clerk
701 Ocean Street, Room 210
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Ms. Pellerin:

Thank you for your letter of September 1, 2009, regarding the additional cost to your office of complying with the new requirement that acceptance facilities transmit U.S. passport applications to the Department of State by a traceable delivery method. Your letter urged the Department to re-evaluate the current execution fee and increase the charge to meet the cost of service.

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your facility's dedicated service to the Passport Application Acceptance Program. Your letter describes the responsibilities of an acceptance agent, and you are correct, they are plentiful. The convenient, close-to-home public service you willingly offer the men and women of your community is truly valued by the Department and the American traveling public.

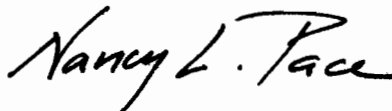
The Government Accountability Office and the Department's Inspector General have recommended that Passport Services require all acceptance facilities to transmit applications using a traceable delivery method to ensure that each application enters a more secure mail stream while in transit to Passport Services. While we recognize that this new requirement entails additional costs to acceptance facilities, it is essential to protecting our customers' sensitive personal information. Please note the task of mailing passport applications on a daily basis has been a standing requirement previous to this directive. The *Passport Agent's Reference Guide* (PARG) instructs that all passport applications are to be mailed by the facility the same day they are executed. The only exception to this policy is when an application is executed after your facility's scheduled mail pick-up time has already occurred; in which case the application must be mailed the following business day.

The \$25 execution fee that is collected and retained by the acceptance facility is intended to cover the costs associated with passport acceptance. Prior to the 2008 change in execution fee, from \$30 to \$25, a cost of service study was conducted to evaluate the domestic cost of accepting a passport application. This study indicated the \$25 execution fee covered the costs associated with acceptance and allowed for future growth in associated costs.

Passport Services highly values the service that your office provides and the critical role you play in helping to ensure the security and integrity of the U.S. passport issuance process.

We hope this information is helpful in addressing your concerns. My staff and I are available to assist you as your office transitions to this new requirement. Please do not hesitate to contact the San Francisco Passport Agency Customer Service Manager, Mike Silva at (415) 538-2741 or SilvaM@state.gov if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy L. Pace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "N" and "P".

Nancy Pace
National Customer Service Manager
Passport Services