

U.S. visa applicants must now provide social media information

On May 31, 2019, the U.S. Department of State implemented changes to its visa application forms to request additional information from applicants, including social media identifiers. These changes went into effect immediately. The visa application forms are known as Form DS-160, Application for a Nonimmigrant Visa, and Form DS-260, Application for an Immigrant Visa. These forms now ask for all social media user names or "handles" used by the applicant on various social media platforms over the last five years. They also ask applicants to provide all prior telephone numbers and email addresses used over the last five years.

It is important to note that the forms do not simply ask for information relating to the major U.S. social media outlets. They require applicants to list user names/handles for at least 20 social media sites, including the following:

- ASK.FM
- DOUBAN
- FACEBOOK
- FLICKR
- GOOGLE+
- INSTAGRAM
- LINKEDIN
- MYSPACE
- PINTEREST
- QZONE (QQ)
- REDDIT
- SINA WEIBO
- TENCENT WEIBO
- TUMBLR
- TWITTER
- TWOO
- VINE
- VKONTAKTE (VK)
- YOUKU
- YOUTUBE

At this writing, visa applicants are not required to provide their passwords--only their user names or handles.

This update grew out of President Trump's March 6, 2017 Memorandum on Implementing Heightened Screening and Vetting of Applications for Visas and Other Immigration Benefits and Section 5 of Executive Order 13780 regarding implementation of uniform screening and vetting standards for visa applications. Notice of this change was published in the Federal Register in August of 2018.

If you have any questions about how to complete Form DS-160 or Form DS-260, feel free to contact The Shpigler Law Firm by email at debbie@shpigler.net or by telephone at 770-592-0009.