



Date: March 20, 2020

Aloha to our Film Industry Colleagues,

Due to unforeseen circumstances that occurred March 11, 2020 at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport (HNL), we regret to inform you that Hawaii International Film Association (HIFA) Hawaii Visa Waiver Pilot Program (VWPP) has been temporarily suspended.

It is to our understanding that 6 foreign nationals using the HIFA waiver letter (HFVPP) were detained and deported immediately on March 11. Another 12 foreign nationals using the HFVPP were detained the same day and deported the following day, March 12.

We reached out to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) office at the HNL immediately, but were told by the CBP director that the HIFA Visa Waiver program was not being accepted at this time. He told HIFA that only current immigration law was being followed.

It is also not clear why some crew members were allowed entry to the U.S. at HNL and others were denied. We have repeatedly inquired about the deported individuals to better understand the reasoning for the deportation but no clear justification was given.

We were told that the incident that occurred was a personal matter, pertaining only to the individual who was detained and that CBP is not able to comment on any of their cases due to privacy laws.

CBP director has also mentioned that all "Film" crews should be obtaining "I", "O" or "P" visas for lawful entry into Hawaii or the United States. If this is the decision, the Visa Waiver Pilot Program for film crews entering Hawaii for any television, commercials, or feature film projects are invalid and cannot be used.

The Hawaii VWPP has been in accepted successfully by Customs and Border officials in Honolulu and Kona since 1998. There has never been any misunderstanding of this kind anytime during the history of this program.

This Visa Waiver Pilot program was established with direct assistance from Senator Daniel Inouye, negotiated with U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials, Film Labor Union leaders, the U.S. Department of Labor, State of Hawaii government officials, and the Hawaii Film Office.

Unfortunately, with all the inconsistencies that have occurred in the last week, HIFA is no longer confident to issue the VWPP to any International film crews who choose to fly into Honolulu or Kona International airports.

HIFA is working closely with the State of Hawaii Film Commissioner Donne Dawson, along with U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono's Office on the Federal level to find a solution to this matter.

We appreciate your patience and hope to resolve this situation soon to allow the most expeditious recovery and resumption of International film productions traveling to Hawaii.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry Ladera", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harry Ladera  
HIFA President