



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
12/8/2025

Press Contact: Cathleen Special
(860) 889-2365 ext. 122

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DIRECTS OTIS LIBRARY
TO STOP PASSPORT SERVICE**

Norwich – Otis Library will cease passport acceptance operations immediately at the direction of the U.S. Department of State. Under new federal government guidelines, only government agencies are allowed to provide passport services. This directive excludes all 501(c)(3) Nonprofits from the Passport Acceptance Facility program, regardless of their relationship to the government or their government-funded status.

Otis Library has offered passport services since 2007 and last year processed 190 applications. According to Cathleen Special, Executive Director of Otis Library, “We are deeply disappointed to lose this service, for the library and for the community. For 18 years, Otis Library has provided efficient passport facilitation in a safe, welcoming, and comfortable environment for individuals and families. As one of only two locations in Norwich offering this essential service, our ability to support residents in this way has been both an honor and a vital community resource.”

Over the years, offering passport service has enhanced the Library’s budget. While Otis Library is designated as the principal public library of Norwich, it is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit and is not directly managed by the municipal or state government. Instead, the Library is governed independently by a Board of Trustees. The City of Norwich provides funding to Otis Library, supporting 75% of its annual budget. The balance is funded through grants, fundraising events, generous donors, and services like the Passport Acceptance Facility program. In fiscal year 2025, passport services generated over \$8,500 for the library. Income from the passport service allowed the library to enhance services, as well as underwrite general operating costs. The loss of this revenue will have an impact on library services.

According to Jessa Franco, previously the Passport Facility Manager, canceling the service will have an impact on the community at large. “As a library, we have the unique opportunity to

meet our community's needs on their schedule. We were able to offer evening and Saturday appointments for working applicants and their families, as well as translation services for those who needed a little extra help navigating the forms. Removing libraries from the program is going to make travel harder for a lot of people. It creates a barrier to a basic right included with U.S. citizenship."

The State Department directive does not indicate if or when the library might be able to resume accepting applications. However, Otis Library can still provide passport photo services, at \$15 per person. Photo services are available by appointment and can be scheduled by emailing Emily at egardiner@otislibrarynorwich.org or calling her at (860) 889-2365 ext. 106. The Library also offers computer access for renewing online and printing forms that have to be completed online. Passport forms from the U.S. Department of State are available while supplies last.

For more information, visit OtisLibraryNorwich.org or call the Library at (860) 889-2365. Otis Library is located at 261 Main Street and is accessible to people of all abilities.

--End--