

POWER *of* TRAVEL Coalition

Smarter Visa Policy Now *Talking Points for Congressional Visits*

The Problem

- America's burdensome visa process drives millions of international visitors to other countries at an **enormous cost to our economy**.
- Key **barriers** are:
 1. a highly inefficient and unpredictable visa application approval process;
 2. lack of personnel to process and interview visa applicants and lack of access to a U.S. consular facility; and,
 3. poor planning and communication to applicants.
- From 2000-2010, our nation **lost an opportunity** to gain \$606 billion in total spending from 78 million additional visitors – enough to support 467,000 more jobs annually.

The Opportunity

- The key to economic growth and job creation in travel is through smarter visa policy. **Recapturing America's 17 percent share** of worldwide overseas travel by 2015 and sustaining it through 2020 would:
 1. Attract 98 million more legitimate overseas visitors.
 2. Create an **additional 1.3 million U.S. jobs**.
 3. Inject \$859 billion into the U.S. economy.

Solutions

House of Representatives

- Visa reform legislation has been introduced in the House by Congressman Joe Heck (R-NV-3), H.R. 3039, the "**Welcoming Business Travelers and Tourists to America Act of 2011**".
- Among the key highlights of the bill is setting a standard that requires the State Department to **process visas within 12 days**, and testing the use of **videoconferencing technology** for visa interviews.

Senate

- The “**International Tourism Facilitation Act**” (S. 1653) was introduced by Tourism Caucus Co-Chairs Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Roy Blunt (R-MO).
- The Act calls on the State Department to use its consular resources more effectively to better respond to the rising international travel demand.

Both Chambers

FY12 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill

- The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved the Fiscal Year 2012 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill (S. 1601), which includes **important reforms to the U.S. visa system.**
- The bill, which **needs to be passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate**, includes requirements and directives concerning several key State Department activities:
 - Establish a five-year plan for meeting visa demands from Brazil, China and India;
 - Interview visa applicants from China, Brazil and India within 30 days;
 - Carry out a secure visa videoconferencing pilot program at State’s discretion;
 - Study the possibility of waiving the visa interview for certain Chinese nationals who previously held a U.S. visa.

Secure Travel and Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2011

- Legislation has been introduced in the House and Senate called the **Secure Travel and Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2011** (S.497 & H.R. 959) which we believe could help expand the **Visa Waiver Program (VWP)** to key countries such as Brazil, Chile and Poland.
- Preserving and expanding the VWP will create jobs and bolster our economy by welcoming millions of new international visitors to the U.S.
- The VWP permits business and leisure travelers from 36 participating countries to visit the U.S. for up to 90 days without obtaining a non-immigrant visitor visa.
- Entrance of just Brazil and Chile into the VWP, for example, would likely double visitation quickly from these countries, thus **generating \$10.3 billion in export revenues and supporting 95,100 American jobs.**

ASK: *(House only)* Please contact Representative Heck’s office to get details and co-sponsor H.R. 3039.

ASK: *(Senate Only)* Please contact Senators Klobuchar or Blunt’s office to get details and co-sponsor S. 1653

ASK: Please support the passage of the fiscal year 2012 Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill with the inclusion of visa reforms in section 7079 of the Senate version.

ASK: Please contact Senator Mikulski’s or Senator Kirk’s office or Representative Quigley’s office to get details and co-sponsor S. 497 or H.R. 959.