

Preserve and Continue to Expand the Visa Waiver Program

- The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) allows pre-screened, pre-approved travelers from participating countries to travel to the United States without obtaining a visa for business or leisure stays of up to 90 days. The 38 closely allied participating countries are required to maintain high security standards and share information with the U.S.
- In 2014, more than 20.3 million visitors to the U.S.—60 percent of all overseas visitors—arrived through the VWP. These visitors generated \$190 billion in total output for the U.S. economy, supporting nearly one million American jobs.
- The Visa Waiver Program enhances U.S. security because:
 - All VWP travelers are pre-screened through the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before ever stepping onboard a flight to the U.S.
 - VWP travelers to the U.S. are checked against multiple law enforcement and security databases before arrival.
 - Participating countries are required to allow U.S. inspections of their security standards and protocols.
 - VWP countries must promptly report data on all lost and stolen passports.
 - Participating countries must also use biometric passports that conform to stringent international security standards.
- **Members of the House of Representatives and Senate are encouraged to support policies that strengthen and expand the Visa Waiver Program.**

Air Travel Modernization: Keeping America Globally Connected and Competitive

- In the next decade, air travel is forecasted to grow from 756 million enplanements per year to almost 927 million, which could add \$243 billion in annual travel spending and support 850,000 new American jobs. To seize this opportunity, we must address problems threatening future growth such as aging airport infrastructure, declining airline competition and an outdated air traffic control system.
- Congress should give airport authorities the option to adjust user fees (called “passenger facility charges”) to a maximum of \$8.50 per passenger. These funds could only be used to pay for projects that increase airport capacity, enhance airline competition, reduce congestion, strengthen safety/ security or reduce airport noise. This forward looking measure:
 - Modernizes airport infrastructure.
 - Enhances airline competition and expands air service.
 - Reduces air traffic congestion.
 - Improves the passenger experience.
- **Members of the House of Representatives and Senate are encouraged to support policies in the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization that will give airport authorities the ability to raise the cap on the passenger facility charge to a maximum of \$8.50.**

Show Appreciation for FAST Act Passage

- If your Member voted YES on the "Fixing America's Surface Transportation" (FAST) Act (check scorecard.ustravel.org OR the back of your DCH name badge), please thank them for their support of this legislation. The FAST Act included three U.S. Travel-supported provisions that will facilitate the development of transportation strategies to enhance travel and tourism.
- Two of these provisions strengthen the role of the travel industry by ensuring our priorities are considered in the statewide surface transportation and Metropolitan Transportation Planning (MPO) process.
- Additionally, the FAST Act established a **National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure**, comprised of travel leaders and transportation stakeholders. This advisory board is especially useful as it will advise and provide guidance to the Secretary of Transportation in two key areas:
 - Identifying the most important transportation corridors for long-haul domestic and international travel.
 - Developing a long-term plan to invest in infrastructure and operational improvements along these important travel corridors.
- **The FAST Act's passage, combined with increased investments in highways and public transportation infrastructure, will ensure the travel industry continues to play its vital role in the U.S. economy.**

When in Crisis: Remember Travel

- There are times when Congress must respond quickly to security, health and budgetary crises:
 - Consider the impact of the response to a terrorist attack:
 - In the immediate aftermath of the Paris and San Bernadino terrorist attacks, the VWP was wrongly scapegoated and some lawmakers even pushed to suspend or undermine the program.
 - In an effort to address a security issue, the VWP was nearly rendered incapable of delivering on either its economic or security promise.
 - U.S. Travel and its membership rallied to educate lawmakers on the program's strong track record on both fronts, and partnered with them to arrive at policy solutions that enhanced, not undermined, the program. This process proved that security and travel facilitation are not mutually exclusive.
 - What can we learn from the U.S. government's response to health crises?
 - The U.S. government's Ebola response stands as a great example for how to handle the Zika virus. When considering responses to Zika, Congress should listen to medical professionals, and consider all of the logistics of transmission before enacting any preventative measures that could affect legitimate travel.
 - Remember that government shutdowns and budget issues are felt by local communities.
 - Budgetary uncertainty can cause exponential chaos for the travel industry due to loss of vital personnel and services, flight delays and closure of National Parks. When budgetary issues arise, Congress must remember that the effects of their decisions are multiplied at the local level, and felt by many of their constituents, whose jobs are directly supported by a functioning air travel infrastructure, National Parks and more.
- Lawmakers must remember that travel often inadvertently suffers in the aftermath of these rapid decisions—and travel supports jobs in every state and congressional district.
- When travel suffers, so does the American economy—the travel industry has added jobs faster than other sectors since economic recovery began.
- **Congress must not inadvertently jeopardize legitimate travel when reacting to security, health and budgetary crises.**

PRIORITY ISSUES (CONTINUED)

Promote the Travel & Tourism Caucuses

- Travel & Tourism Caucuses exist in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The caucuses are made up of Members of Congress who recognize the economic importance of travel and tourism within their communities and the vital need for a collective voice in Congress to support the policy initiatives of our multi-faceted industry.
 - The economic benefit of travel and tourism extends to all 50 states and every congressional district. In fact, travel and tourism ranks in the top 10 industries in 49 states and Washington, D.C.
 - Encourage members of Congress to join their respective Travel & Tourism Caucus. Senators should contact the offices of Roy Blunt (R-MO) or Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). Representatives should contact the offices of Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) or Sam Farr (D-CA).
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