

# CONGRESSIONAL TALKING POINTS



This National Travel and Tourism Week, the industry is turning its eyes to the [#FutureOfTravel](#) and how it can come back stronger than ever before.

The industry is beginning to get back on its feet, but we are not where we should be in the recovery process. Congress can help ensure that this vital sector of the U.S. economy can recover evenly and grow in the months and years to come.

## THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS CAN BE USED TO CONVEY TRAVEL'S IMPACT TO ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- Prior to the pandemic, the U.S. travel industry experienced 10 straight years of growth due to the strength of the domestic leisure travel, domestic business travel and international inbound travel segments.
- Travel was a significant economic driver in every region of the country, representing 1 in 10 jobs and generating a travel trade surplus.
- With many pandemic-era restrictions still in effect, travel's recovery has been uneven—with business and international travel spending severely depressed. We're not where we should be.
  - International inbound spending remains down 78% from pre-pandemic levels.
  - Business travel (domestic) spending is 56% below 2019 levels.
- Not only do we need to get back to pre-pandemic levels, **we need to make up for years of losses.**

## POLICY POINTS

While we are years away from returning to 2019 levels, the right stimulative policies can return the travel industry to the trajectory of growth.

## REBUILD THE WORKFORCE

- While other sectors of the economy have recovered from the pandemic, the travel workforce remains disproportionately affected. U.S. employment is just 1% below 2019 levels, however, Leisure & Hospitality (L&H) employment is down a staggering 9%.
- Not having employees is just as damaging as not having customers.
- Long-term structural reforms to temporary worker programs that would provide the travel industry with dedicated, increased and predictable access to temporary seasonal work visas.
- Congress should support legislation to exempt returning workers from the cap on H-2B visas, and encourage the Department of Homeland Security to release all authorized H-2B visas.



## **REIGNITE IN-PERSON MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

- Business travel was still 56% below pre-pandemic levels in 2021 and remains severely depressed.
- This is having a disproportionate impact on the overall travel industry's recovery.
- To encourage business travel spending, we're calling on Congress to extend the business meal expense deduction and restore the business entertainment expense deduction.

## **RESTORE INTERNATIONAL INBOUND TRAVEL**

- After many months of border closures—and while inbound testing requirements and masking persist—international inbound travel has struggled to recover.
- To facilitate international travel growth, Congress can encourage the Biden administration to remove remaining COVID travel restrictions, such as the inbound testing requirement for vaccinated passengers and the federal mask mandate.
- Congress can also encourage the Biden administration to restore visa processing operations worldwide and reduce visa wait times, which are averaging more than a year for most countries.

## **REIMAGINE THE ROLE OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN IMPROVING GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS**

- The pandemic decimated the travel industry, resulting in a two-year loss of \$755 billion in travel spending from which the industry is not expected to fully recover until 2024.
- Proactive government planning will be necessary to shorten that timeline, restore jobs more quickly and reclaim significant losses in export income.
- The Omnibus Travel and Tourism Act of 2021 (S. 3375) establishes permanent, high-level leadership in the federal government on travel issues, enhances travel facilitation and security, improves global competitiveness and ensures our nation has long-term strategies for travel's economic recovery.