

POLICIES TO INCREASE TRAVEL'S GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN 2024

TRAVEL IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE NATION'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

- Travel is a \$2.6 trillion industry that supports 15 million jobs while fueling other important industries like manufacturing, health care and education.
- In 2023, the U.S. welcomed 67.3 million international visitors—that's only 85% recovered from pre-pandemic levels.
- **Other countries are rebounding much faster.** The U.S.'s share of the global travel market is declining while some competitors have already surpassed their pre-pandemic market share.
- Our competitors are racing ahead to modernize their travel practices and be more globally competitive. **The U.S. is stuck in neutral and falling behind.**
- There are **several critical opportunities** this year to grow this vital sector of the U.S. economy and ensure the United States' long-term global competitiveness.

LOWER VISITOR VISA WAIT TIMES

Talking Points

Currently, it takes 400 days on average for foreign visitors to get a U.S. visitor visa in our top source markets—like Brazil. The U.S. risks losing 39 million visitors and \$150 billion in spending over the next 10 years due to excessive visitor visa wait times. A recent study by Euromonitor International found the U.S. has the highest visitor visa wait times, compared to our top competitors—like Canada, Spain, Italy, the UK, and Australia.

Simple improvements to the State Department's administration of the visa application process could significantly improve the outlook for inbound international travel—which is on track to remain below pre-pandemic levels until at least 2026 if nothing is done.

Our Ask

- **SENATE:** Cosponsor the bipartisan Visa Processing Improvement Act (S.2632), led by **Senators Klobuchar (D-MN) and Moran (R-KS)**. The bill would allow the State Department to waive in-person interviews for previous visa holders who have cleared security checks, previously visited the United States and left on time.
- **HOUSE:** Support the introduction of similar legislation in the House to S. 2632, the Visa Processing Improvement Act. Please contact U.S. Travel representatives if your boss is interested in working on the bill.

LOWER CUSTOMS WAIT TIMES

Talking Points

In some of the U.S.'s busiest airports, passengers have had to wait more than 2 hours to get through customs at peak times. U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) currently faces a workforce shortage of at least 1,500 personnel. This shortage is causing CBP to turn away new international routes in some cases. Each time a new daily route is turned away, it costs the U.S. economy \$227 million per year in lost spending.

According to a recent study by Euromonitor International, the U.S. ranks 12th among our top 18 competitors, in terms of how long it takes to get through customs. Advances in technology—like facial matching technology—and vetting passengers prior to arrival can allow CBP to reduce wait-times for low-risk passengers. With historic pressures on CBP staffing and resources, Congress should encourage CBP to innovate at U.S. airports.

Our Ask

- Support efforts to reduce customs wait times, including funding in FY25 appropriations to increase CBP staffing or language directing CBP to find innovative ways to streamline the process.

FULLY FUND THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR TRAVEL & TOURISM

Talking Points

In a recent study of the top 18 countries for global travel, the U.S. ranked last in government leadership on travel issues. The U.S. is the only G20 country without a federal agency or cabinet-level official in charge of travel policy. The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism is tasked with increasing our country's overall global competitiveness in travel. By leading efforts across the federal government to grow domestic and international travel, the Assistant Secretary can maximize travel's economic potential and boost the overall economy.

Our Ask

- Provide full funding for the office of the Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism, to ensure the Assistant Secretary can effectively lead and coordinate policies across the government to protect and grow travel.

ADVANCE FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Talking Points

According to a recent Ipsos survey, air travelers avoid an average of 2 trips per year due to air travel hassles, equating to the loss of 27 million trips and \$71 billion in spending each year. Much of the hassles air travelers experience are due to years of underinvestment in our air travel system, including insufficient funding for pilot training and inadequate staffing and outdated technology for Air Traffic Controllers. We need a more modern, efficient, and dependable air travel system to keep up with expected growth. That's why we need a long-term reauthorization bill for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Our Ask:

Pass a final FAA reauthorization bill that provides funding policy changes to

- Increase Air Traffic Control staffing and modernize ATC technology.
- Increase workforce development grants for pilot training and certification.
- Increase funding and provide greater flexibility for airport improvement grants.

JOIN YOUR COLLEAGUES ON THE CONGRESSIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM CAUCUSES

- The Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucus’s mission is to formulate national policy that promotes travel to and within the United States. Members of the caucus pledge to work in a bipartisan manner to promote issues important to the travel and tourism industry and to educate Members and staff about these issues.
- If you are not yet a Member, please reach out to the offices of the caucus co-chairs—**Sen. Klobuchar** ([Baz Selassie baz](mailto:selassie_baz@klobuchar.senate.gov) selassie@klobuchar.senate.gov) and **Sen. Moran** ([Lauren Bates](mailto:lauren_bates@moran.senate.gov) lauren_bates@moran.senate.gov) and **Rep. Bilirakis** ([Chris Jones](mailto:chris.jones@mail.house.gov) chris.jones@mail.house.gov) and **Rep. Titus** ([Mitch Moonier](mailto:mitch.moonier@mail.house.gov) mitch.moonier@mail.house.gov)— about joining!