

U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION®

U.S. TRAVEL'S 119TH CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY AND POLICY PRIORITIES

BACKGROUND

America is losing its competitive edge as a global travel destination. Since 2000, the United States has lost 41% of its share of long-haul travelers and international visitation still lags behind its peak in 2018. Outdated airport infrastructure, excessive screening and customs lines and delays in visitor visa processing send a troubling message to the world: America is falling behind.

As we approach a mega-decade of events, including the 2025 Ryder Cup, America 250, the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics, Congress has a historic opportunity to fix these challenges and showcase America's greatness to the world. With the right policies in place, these events can successfully welcome 40 million international visitors and drive nearly \$100 billion in economic activity.

By acting now, Congress can promote America as the world's top travel destination and deliver the secure, modern and efficient travel experience that Americans deserve.

FIVE CRUCIAL STEPS CONGRESS MUST TAKE NOW

- 1. CREATE A WORLD-CLASS AIRPORT CUSTOMS PROCESS TO KEEP AMERICA SAFE AND GLOBAL TRAVEL MOVING.** Strengthen security and improve efficiency of international customs inspections at U.S. airports.
 - Fund an additional 2,000 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers to fully staff U.S. airports of entry.
 - Invest \$600 million to complete CBP's biometric air exit system within 2 years and enhance the Traveler Verification Service (TVS) that is used to identify travelers entering and exiting the U.S. Extend H-1B and L visa fees to adequately fund biometric programs in the future.
 - Authorize CBP to expand Enhanced Passenger Processing (EPP) and Seamless Border Entry (SBE) to the top 25 airports by the end of 2026 to improve risk-based security operations. EPP allows low-risk U.S. citizens to forgo customs interviews if they pass pre-arrival vetting, have their identities biometrically confirmed and have nothing to declare. SBE uses advanced biometric technology to confirm the identities of Global Entry travelers on the move, without the need to stop at a kiosk.
 - Oppose diverting Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) fee revenue from Brand USA. ESTA fee revenue provides critical funding to vet Visa Waiver Program travelers and supports Brand USA's programs to increase international visitation for a mega decade of events, including America 250 and the 2026 World Cup.

2. BOLSTER ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS FOR TRAVEL BUSINESSES AND WORKERS.

- Encourage travel businesses to finance capital investments by reinstating the EBITDA standard for interest expense deductions and 100% bonus depreciation. Defend against proposals to tax 501(c) organizations.
- Increase the H-2B visa cap for hospitality workers supporting major global events hosted in the U.S.
- Provide \$3.5 million in funding for the International Trade Administration (ITA) to implement the Visit America Act and establish the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism at the Department of Commerce.
- Oppose legislation to regulate loyalty or rewards programs and so called ‘junk fees’ that benefit travelers and small travel businesses.

3. STRENGTHEN SECURITY AND REDUCE BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS FOR VISITOR VISA PROCESSING.

Improve security vetting for visa applicants, while streamlining the application process, in advance of the upcoming mega decade of events.

- Establish a National Vetting Service (NVS) dedicated to visa processing and traveler vetting. The NVS would be a professional national security workforce that is fully funded through visa fees, separate from the Foreign Service, and could be surged anywhere in the world to efficiently handle visa processing demand.
- Create a Secure Travel Partnership to increase countries that have strong travel security agreements with the U.S. Introduce and enact legislation to establish the Partnership where countries could qualify for facilitation benefits by meeting all security requirements of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) while keeping refusal rates below 12% and overstay rates below 5%. In return, highly qualified first-time B-1/B-2 visa applicants from Partnership countries could have in-person interviews and biometric collection done by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) upon arrival at U.S. airports rather than at U.S. consulates and embassies.
- Codify interview waiver authority for low-risk visa applicants and provide resources to the State Department when visa wait times consistently exceed 90 days.
- Appropriate \$491 million in unused visa fees for Consular Affairs and Border Security Programs to securely and efficiently process visas and lower wait times in advance of the upcoming decade of U.S. hosted world events.

4. MAKE HISTORIC INVESTMENTS IN SECURITY TECHNOLOGY TO REVOLUTIONIZE AIRPORT SCREENING FOR ALL TRAVELERS.

- Accelerate deployment of cutting-edge technology that will strengthen security and reduce wait times by allowing all travelers to carry water bottles and larger liquids, leave all electronics in bags and keep shoes, jackets and belts on.
- End the diversion of the Passenger Security Fee and increase TSA’s technology budget by \$660 million to deploy identity verification, on-person screening and baggage scanning technology to every U.S. airport lane within 5 years.
- Reject proposals that undermine biometric technology and revert to vulnerable manual identity processing.

5. GROWING INVESTMENTS IN TRAVEL MOBILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

- Increase funding for the air traffic control system to modernize facilities and equipment, while addressing staffing shortages among air traffic controllers, to ensure that America continues to have a safe, resilient and reliable airspace system.
- Increase funding for airport security infrastructure and technology in the upcoming infrastructure bill to improve the traveler experience, while increasing security.
- Provide funds for hard infrastructure projects that would revolutionize travel mobility in the U.S. focusing on modes of the future, such as high-speed rail, gateway airports and advanced air mobility.
- Support the reauthorization of the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) past 2025, which includes the Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) that provides funding to address long overdue infrastructure and maintenance needs at our National Parks.
- Ensure that any workforce reductions to the National Park Service (NPS) do not impact hours of operation or park services and maintenance in order to maximize attractiveness and visitation demand of our treasured National Parks during America 250.

STAY UPDATED [USTRAVEL.ORG/POLICY](https://ustravel.org/policy)

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