Dear Chairmen Wicker and Johnson, and Ranking Members Cantwell and Peters,

We write to request your support for securing Brand USA’s funding mechanism, which expires soon. This important program enables significant economic input for our economy.

Travel and tourism are drivers of the American economy, fueling one in every nine American jobs. According to the U.S. Travel Association, traveler spending in the United States generated $2.4 trillion in economic output in 2017 and supported 15.6 million jobs.

Brand USA is a public-private partnership that serves as the destination marketing organization for the United States. Created by the bipartisan Travel Promotion Act of 2009, Brand USA’s mission is to encourage visitation to the United States and to grow America’s share of the international travel market. Brand USA operates at no cost to the American taxpayer. It is funded through a fee on international visitors to the United States traveling under the Visa Waiver Program, and through voluntary private-sector contributions.

Since fiscal year 2013, Brand USA’s marketing efforts have brought 5.4 million incremental international visitors to the United States. These international visitors spent $17.7 billion, generating a total economic impact of $38.4 billion and supporting an average of 51,580 jobs per year. In 2017 alone, Brand USA marketing brought an additional 1.16 million international visitors to the United States, generating an economic impact of $8.5 billion.

Though the program has been a proven success in boosting tourism to the United States and driving economic growth, the 2018 congressional budget caps agreement diverted Brand USA’s
user fees away from the program to general revenue. We strongly support protecting and renewing Brand USA’s funding, while upholding the original structure that no taxpayer dollars should be used to fund the program.

The new Congress must unite around this bipartisan issue as it has done in the past, and reauthorize Brand USA. The program was reauthorized in 2014 with broad bipartisan support. Within the 115th Congress, 36 House Republicans and 34 House Democrats signed a similar letter to House leadership calling for a Brand USA funding fix. In addition, over 600 major entities, from tourism boards to corporations, representing all 50 states, have co-signed a letter making a similar request for Brand USA funding reauthorization. The future of the United States’ international travel promotion and planning will be in jeopardy until the program is reauthorized.

Brand USA is a proven and cost-effective travel promotion program, and we encourage support for a legislative fix for Brand USA in the upcoming budget caps negotiations. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator
Josh Hawley
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

John Kennedy
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Martha McSally
United States Senator

Ed Markey
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator
David Perdue  
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

Pat Roberts  
United States Senator

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

Mitt Romney  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

John Thune  
United States Senator

Jon Tester  
United States Senator