



# BRAND USA SAMPLE OP-ED



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## TOURISM WORKS FOR [DESTINATION]

Travel and tourism is an underrated contributor to the [DESTINATION] economy, supporting [XX] jobs and [XX] in economic activity every year.

Our region is a prime example of how the travel industry can be a top economic performer in any corner of the country, not just in big coastal destinations or famous attractions like the Grand Canyon. But that success doesn't come without a little bit of help.

Brand USA, the public-private partnership tasked with promoting the United States as a travel destination to visitors abroad, is set to expire in 2020. Brand USA works for America, and it is crucial that Congress secure its long-term reauthorization.

Overseas visitors are some of the most lucrative there are, spending an average of about \$4,200 per person, per trip. And Brand USA's mission is to promote destinations to and beyond the largest "gateway" cities like New York and Los Angeles, ensuring all pockets of America benefit from the economic rewards of international visitation—including [YOUR DESTINATION]. [Highlight tourism's importance to your DESTINATION/DISTRICT/STATE or key attractions in your DESTINATION/DISTRICT/STATE]

Travel is America's second-largest industry export, generating a trade surplus last year of \$69 billion—without which the overall national trade deficit would have been 11% higher. However, that positive balance of trade is jeopardized by America's slipping share of the global travel market, which dropped from 13.7% in 2015 to its current 11.7%.

That decline represents a difference of 14 million visitors and a hit to the U.S. economy of \$59 billion in spending and 120,000 American jobs.

The proven success of Brand USA prevented the market-share decline from being worse. Brand USA's marketing efforts over the past six years have generated more than 6.6 million incremental international visitors, \$22 billion in visitor spending, \$47.7 billion in total economic output and supported an average of 52,000 American jobs annually.

Here in [DESTINATION/DISTRICT/STATE], Brand USA helps welcome [XX] of annual international visitors and support [XX] travel and tourism jobs.

Best of all? Brand USA does all of its important work at zero cost to the American taxpayer, relying instead on fees paid by ESTA-approved travelers to the U.S., plus matching contributions from the private sector. Some of our biggest rivals for international visitors—such as France, Italy, and Spain—heavily fund their tourism promotion budgets using taxpayer dollars; allowing Brand USA to lapse would therefore leave the U.S. severely outmatched in the competition for international visitor dollars.

There is broad private-sector support for Brand USA in all 50 states, with almost 600 businesses and travel organizations signing a letter last year in support of the program's reauthorization. Brand USA also has strong bipartisan support in Congress: a U.S. House "Dear Colleague" letter in support of Brand USA closed with more than 100 lawmaker signatures, while nearly 50 senators signed a similar "Dear Colleague" letter. The "Brand USA Extension Act" (S. 2203) overwhelmingly passed the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation in July, garnering enthusiastic bipartisan support.

This program is a prime example of smart policymaking, with a proven track record and an impressive return on investment without cost to U.S. taxpayers. It is crucial that Congress recognize travel and tourism's value to the American economy and to [YOUR DESTINATION/DISTRICT/STATE] and reauthorize Brand USA this year.