



## UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

September 25, 2013

The Honorable Penny Pritzker  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

On behalf of the United States Travel & Tourism Advisory Board, we are writing to offer recommendations to advocate for and to advance federal efforts in support of the travel and tourism industry.

We hold a fundamental belief that travel and tourism are key to an economic engine that increases trade and exports, stimulates jobs, and enables inclusive tourism development and workforce development. We believe that active collaboration by a broad spectrum of government agencies, including the Department of Commerce, is critical to maintaining this sector of the American economy.

Our policy issues fall into four broad categories:

1. Raise the understanding of the value of travel and tourism across a broad spectrum of federal agencies through our effort to coordinate policy by maintaining leadership in the Tourism Policy Council.
2. Create and strengthen the content and demand for the touring consumer. This category is not only about increasing attendance at our country's well established attractions, but also about increased access to historic, natural and cultural attractions - part of the authentic

experience available in every one of our states and territories. This also means enhanced local capacity to meet increased demand.

3. Communicate the availability, locations and easy access of this tourism content. This is important to increasing our global marketing presence and allowing public and private partners to leverage the resources of the federal government.

4. Enhance travel through support of Global Entry, TSA Pre✓, NextGen and other strategies to improve travel options. Removing the impediments to travel, such as an improved visa waiver process, helps increase visitor entry to our country.

### **Maintain Leadership by the Tourism Policy Council**

The Board believes that the Tourism Policy Council can serve a critical role by allowing the Secretary of Commerce to coordinate travel and tourism initiatives with many other federal agencies and across many categories of need. The Council has been working with renewed energy thanks to the adoption and ongoing implementation of the National Travel & Tourism Strategy. In addition to the current participation by the Secretaries of State, Interior, Labor, Transportation, and divisions of the Homeland Security Department, we also recommend specifically inviting and actively engaging the secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts to further integrate federal resources in areas like agri-tourism, community-based tourism and cultural program support. These policy areas will help to boost tourism in rural, as well as all other, parts of the country.

### **Strengthening Content, Demand and Experience**

Through a series of recommendation letters, the Board has sought action on a variety of policy items – all of which have been, and will continue to be, central to reaching our nation’s travel and tourism objectives. We also would like to introduce some new recommendations that address more specific opportunities throughout our federal government’s oversight of travel and tourism.

**Strengthen support of federal economic and community development programs for travel and tourism.** These recommendations, supported by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, would include providing additional federal financial assistance to Preserve America, the National Historic Registry Program, Community Development Block Grant and the Mayors’ Institute for City Design, among others. In many cases, the prime catalyst to increasing tourism and securing the economic viability of a community is the preservation of its historic buildings and thoughtful

creation of new construction. Giving localities an enhanced ability to protect their culture and heritage will allow them to preserve, through sustainable green growth, the uniqueness and culture of every community and increase their competitiveness. Support for integrated public art design enhancements in airports implemented through local Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budgets can help smaller destinations throughout the country promote themselves as travel destinations. Additionally, we recommend increased funding through the Department of Commerce and Department of the Interior's American Indian programs within public lands, waterways and tribal communities. We also recommend support for domestic and international travel conferences and for tourism development technical assistance to support American Indian tourism efforts including support for the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA). American Indian tourism not only provides a rich cultural visitor experience, but it also provides jobs, reverses rural out-migration, and increases pride in America's tribal communities. Finally, we recommend you use the substantial influence of your office, through the Tourism Policy Council and otherwise, to champion increased funding levels for the programs of other federal agencies that support the destination content that visitors come to America to enjoy. These include strengthening community development efforts, such as the Section 108 Guaranteed Loan Program at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, all of which will increase visitation to our country.

**Reauthorize the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program at the U.S. Department of Transportation.** Of the \$6 billion spent since 1991 on federal transportation enhancement projects, there have been significant arts components included ranging from public art installations to construction of new performing arts facilities and cultural attractions. Encourage partnerships between the TE program and state and local arts agencies when considering design projects. Encourage, and enable, localities to make increased designations of cultural districts, trails and corridors and improve signage and byways to cultural sites.

**Encourage state and territorial-level strategies to develop their tourism economies.** The National Governors Association recommends boosting tourism by leveraging and marketing the unique culture and food of regions, states and territories. This includes supporting the use of tax credits and other kinds of incentives to encourage cities and developers to create cultural districts, creative corridors, innovation hubs and other places that will attract a critical mass of creative talent and facilitate co-location, or geographic clustering, of complementary businesses. Tracking and reporting the changes in population, employment, property tax bases and taxable sales will help measure the effectiveness and communicate the progress of these zones and districts. Finally, through zoning and land use authority, tourism efforts can catalyze or reinforce high-quality places as a competitive advantage for states in a global economy. Your

leadership in encouraging these state-based efforts as you work with policy leaders would be valuable.

### **Continue Strong Communication Through Reauthorization of the Travel Promotion Act**

Brand USA is a non-profit, public-private partnership established by the *Travel Promotion Act (TPA)* that is dedicated to increasing inbound international travel to the United States. By attracting more visitors, Brand USA increases U.S. economic growth, spurs job creation and creates a more positive impression of the United States around the world.

As Brand USA increases the scope and scale of its outreach to potential international visitors in 2014 and beyond, we recommend long-term support for this program. Integrating Brand USA's outreach with the tourism destination content-related programs of federal agencies such as tribal, natural resources, culinary and cultural content information mechanisms like the information databases of the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and state and local arts and humanities agencies, would assist Brand USA's marketing abroad.

The Administration should request that Congress permanently reauthorize the TPA to increase international visitation, bringing jobs, economic growth and increased tax revenues to communities across America. As of this writing, the Senate has included TPA reauthorization in its current immigration reform legislation; however, the measure's fate is highly uncertain in the House of Representatives. The Administration should keep the need for TPA reauthorization as a top travel and tourism priority.

### **Implementation of the National Travel and Tourism Strategy**

The Board recognizes the value of the broad cross-cutting positions articulated in the National Travel and Tourism Strategy completed in 2012. Efforts should continue and expand the following recommendations excerpted from the Strategy here:

***Conduct outreach with public and private partners.*** Hold a summit on travel and tourism, and an annual travel and tourism event to foster communication among Federal agencies and leaders of state travel offices, destination management organizations, and trade associations.

***Promote regional tourism.*** Develop community-based tourism collaborations in key strategic destination markets, especially those with scenic byways, coastal resources, national scenic and historic trails, wild and scenic rivers, and other natural and cultural attractions. Partner with local communities and engage with tribes to promote tourism

*and provide cultural experiences where welcomed and in a manner sensitive to cultural traditions and beneficial to the communities visited.*

***Partner with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments.*** *Join non-Federal tourism authorities in place-based and activity-based promotional campaigns. Provide grants and technical assistance to qualified public sector entities to support their efforts to attract and serve additional visitors.*

***Partner with the private sector.*** *Encourage workforce investment boards to strengthen partnerships with travel and tourism businesses and convene the business community in their respective regional markets to assess workforce issues. Cross-train private sector hospitality and Federal recreation and visitor service workforces through collaborative curriculum development and delivery.*

***Create a national travel and tourism office at the Department of Commerce.*** *Serve as the primary point of contact for travel and tourism issues within the Federal government and at the national level, represent the United States on travel and tourism issues internationally, and provide day-to-day support needed to implement the National Travel and Tourism Strategy.*

We hope the Commerce Department will advance each one of these recommendations. This last recommendation, "Create a national travel and tourism office at the Department of Commerce," has since received specific support from the Commerce Department and from Congress. In 2013, Congress approved the re-programming request to elevate the Office of Travel & Tourism Industries to a national office in FY 2014. The Board strongly endorses this action and requests that there be increases in dedicated staff and resources for this change to be made a priority.

### **Reduce Travel Impediments & Create New Enhancements for the Travel Experience**

The Board would like to build on the excellent work previous TTAB's have done by introducing new initiatives to maximize the value of the pro-travel agenda now in place in the U.S. Government. We are mindful that government programs have been established, partly in response to TTAB's recommendations, which have enormous potential to transform our industry and increase the quality and quantity of travel and tourism to and within the U.S. and its territories. Among these programs are CBP's Global Entry and TSA's Pre✓ programs, FAA's NextGen initiative and enhanced visa processing at the Department of State. The Senate immigration bill contains important provisions that will advance long-term reforms to the visa system, improve the entry process and expand the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). A separate letter is being prepared to address these items.

## Increase Outreach Efforts for Travel & Tourism

The Board recommends adopting a communications plan to deepen appreciation for this vibrant industry among decision makers and to engage the American public in the travel and tourism success story. We also need to protect the reputation and resilience of the industry with a proactive, industry-wide crisis preparedness plan and a capacity building plan.

The Board recognizes the opportunity to work with Brand USA and the private sector on these marketing and communications budgets given limited government funding. Many of our board members are professional marketers. We recommend creating public/private partnerships that will get the word out throughout the industry about these programs, which will drive adoption and enrollments, generate awareness and change legacy misperceptions about barriers to travel. We want to advocate for these programs and help take them to the next level. Greater detail on this recommendation will be forthcoming in a separate recommendation letter.

Through the adoption of these advocacy recommendations, we believe our national interest will be enhanced. We look forward to working with you in expanding the vision of what travel and tourism can mean to our country and removing barriers to its successful implementation.

We are thankful for this opportunity to submit our recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd Davidson  
Chair



Sam Gilliland  
Vice-Chair



Robert Lynch  
Advocacy Subcommittee Chair



Maureen Bausch  
Advocacy Subcommittee Vice-Chair