

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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U.S. TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

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MEETING

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TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2019

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The Board met in the U.S. Department of Commerce, Room 3407, 1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., at 2:00 p.m., John Sprouls, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT

JOHN SPROULS, Universal Parks and Resorts, Chair
 KURT EKERT, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Vice Chair
 TODD DAVIDSON, Travel Oregon
 BRAD DEAN, Discover Puerto Rico
 SEAN DONOHUE, Dallas-Fort Worth International
 Airport
 JAMES HAGEN, South Dakota Department of Tourism
 RUSSELL HEDGE, Hostelling International USA
 PAM INMAN, National Tour Association
 DEBBIE JOHNSON, Arizona Office of Tourism
 MARY MOTSENBOCKER, International Tourism
 Marketing, Inc.
 TRICIA PRIMROSE, Marriott International
 STEPHEN REVETRIA, San Francisco Giants Baseball
 Club
 BRIAN ROTHERY, Enterprise Holdings
 WILLIAM TALBERT, Greater Miami Convention &
 Visitors Bureau

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ALSO PRESENT

WILBUR ROSS, Secretary of Commerce
BRIAN BEALL, Designated Federal Officer
MATT DAVIES, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
ISABEL HILL, Director, National Travel and
Tourism Office, U.S. Department of
Commerce
PHIL LOVAS, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel
and Tourism, U.S. Department of Commerce
DAN JIRON, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for
Natural Resources and Environment, U.S.
Department of Agriculture
EDWARD RAMOTOWSKI, Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Visa Services, U.S. Department of State
DAVID SHORT, Deputy Assistant Secretary of
Transportation for Aviation and
International Affairs, U.S. Department of
Transportation
BRONTE WIGEN, Special Assistant, Employment and
Training Administration, U.S. Department of
Labor
KATHY WILLS WRIGHT, Deputy Assistant Secretary of
State for International Organization
Affairs, U.S. Department of State
AARON WODIN-SCHWARTZ, Vice President, Public
Policy and Public Affairs, Brand USA
ALEX ZEMEK, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the
Office of Policy, Strategy and Plans,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2:00 p.m.

MR. BEALL: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to today's Travel and Tourism Advisory Board meeting. As the designated federal officer for the Board, I'd like to welcome you all to Washington. And it's my honor to introduce Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross.

SECRETARY ROSS: Well, thank you, Brian, for that very kind introduction. Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the Commerce Department. I see we have law enforcement represented here, too, so a message for me?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY ROSS: But it's great to see you all again. And I thank you for your dedication to the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. Thanks, also, to John and Kurt for your leadership of the Board.

The Board's policy recommendations on a range of issues will guide our actions as we move forward. Your industry is essential to the U.S.

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economy. Last year it generated a trade surplus of more than \$69 billion and supported almost 8 million American jobs. Those are both very impressive figures. And overall, travel and tourism accounted for 31 percent of U.S. services exports and 10 percent of total U.S. exports. In 2018 almost 80 million international visitors spent \$256 billion in the United States, both all-time, yearly records. I know some of us were worried would the new immigration policies hurt tourism, but it looks to me like you fellows have overcome that and then some. So I applaud you.

These visits for business, medical, education and leisure supported 1.2 million jobs across the country. And last December your Board made recommendations to generate more travel to and within the United States. On June 25th I discussed these recommendations with the Tourism Policy Council -- it's an inter-government agency group -- and its representatives from the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, Labor, SBA,

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and the White House National Economic Council. You can see we have no bureaucracy in any of our decisions.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY ROSS: At that meeting, the TPC agreed with your recommendation for a new annual goal of \$445 billion in spending by 116 million international visitors by the end of 2028. The National Travel and Tourism Office is working with those agencies to revise the National Travel and Tourism Strategy. We look forward to updating you on our progress with the strategy at the next TTAB meeting. Last year I also asked for your recommendations about a national workforce strategy, and I was especially interested in how technology is affecting your industry's workforce needs and in learning about the best practices for training and recruitment in your industry.

Several of your recent recommendations connect directly with those being generated by the National Workforce Policy Advisory Board to the White House National Council for the American

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Worker, which I co-chair with Ivanka Trump. The Workforce Advisory Board is studying and developing recommendations for several items; one, to develop a campaign to promote multiple pathways to career success; two, to increase data transparency to better match American workers with vacant American jobs; third, to modernize candidate recruitment and training practices; and finally, to measure and encourage employer-led training investments.

The Trump Administration has launched a new industry recognized apprenticeship system, a major effort to stir employer-led training. I thank you for supporting this new system as well as the existing registered apprenticeship program run by the Department of Labor and its state partners. As you note in your recommendations, additional public funding can help establish new apprenticeship programs in the travel and tourism industry.

The Department of Labor now has \$100 million in funding available for about 30 such

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programs. These will go to public/private partnerships to develop new apprenticeship models and expand existing apprenticeship programs. The funding source is the fees companies pay to hire foreign workers under the H-1B visa program, so it kind of pays for itself. These fees are then provided as grants for training American workers in the occupations for which employers are hiring H-1B workers such as IT jobs.

The Department of Labor is expanding its apprenticeship programs to include cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. Since every sector of the economy requires workers with these skills, I encourage you to consider how companies and associations in the travel and tourism industry might partner with training organizations who are applying for these grants, because the applications would have to be joint between an industry and a training provider.

I also encourage your associations, unions and education partners to consider applying to be a standard recognition entity. These

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entities are the core of the new industry-recognized apprenticeship program. They will set standards for training and curricula in relevant industries and occupations.

I also appreciate your recommendation about the government creating a website to educate the public about travel-related careers and apprenticeship programs. This recommendation is an example of a much broader lack of information or even misinformation about good career opportunities in your industry. Under the leadership of CEOs Tim Cook of Apple and Ginni Rometty of IBM, one of the working groups of the American Workforce Policy Advisory Board is creating a national marketing campaign to promote the pathways to available jobs and careers. You should try to figure out how to incorporate your industry into that set of campaigns. Specific recommendations on this campaign will be described at the September meeting of the Workforce Advisory Board, so any thoughts you can get us prior to then we'll try to get incorporated into the meeting.

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My staff will be pleased to brief you on these recommendations to ensure that the travel and tourism industry is represented in these efforts. Your final set of recommendations involve the U.S. government implementing a biometric entry and exit system at our ports of entry. The Commerce Department is working with Customs and Border Protection to determine how the public and private sectors can work together to accelerate progress toward the biometric systems.

There are representatives here today from the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Labor, and during the meeting they'll provide you with information and feedback on these recommendations. The State Department also has updates on current efforts related to visas, a topic I know is of very great importance to your industry. And they'll also update you on efforts to negotiate bilateral Open Skies agreements. The Department of Homeland Security will provide you with background on its travel facilitation initiatives,

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including implementation of the biometric entry and exit process.

And, finally, the Department of Labor will provide information on its apprenticeship and certification programs for the travel and tourism industry. President Trump, meanwhile, is exploring the possibility of rejoining the United Nations World Tourism Organization on terms that are beneficial to the United States. As you know, we're not crazy in general about these multinational organizations, but we'd be very interested in getting your comments on the benefits of joining it and key things that we should make sure are part of our membership regime.

We're supporting the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs, which is the agency responsible for U.S. engagement with UN organizations. We think that rejoining the UNWTO, not the World Trade Organization -- we have a different attitude towards them -- but this WTO could provide an opportunity for the United States to leverage that

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organization's strength in support of global travel and tourism. So we ask your advice on the potential advantages of rejoining the UNWTO. If there are big disadvantages, we'd also like to hear about those, because we have not made a decision.

Please include ideas in which the public and private sectors can work together to leverage potential U.S. membership, particularly in the areas of global policy development, innovation, and investment in emerging markets.

So with that, as you can see, there's a lot going on and there's more work ahead. Challenges and opportunities, I've found, are never in short supply. So I ask John Sprouls, our Board Chairman, to provide us with comments about these issues and others that will be discussed today.

John, I turn the meeting over to you.

CHAIR SPROULS: Thank you, Secretary Ross. And thank you for the kind remarks about everyone here on the Board. It is a very participative, active board which I have found the number of years that I've been here. And I think

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we're very happy to be able to both serve on the Board and support our industry and feel like we're actually having an impact. It's not a board that is not taken seriously; it is a board that has been able to create recommendations that are helpful not only to our industry, but to the country as a whole. And I think I speak for everyone here, we feel really good about the impact we've been able to continue to have. And we are happy to take another charge from you and come up with advice from the Board with respect to the correct WTO.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: And we will do that with all deliberate speed.

SECRETARY ROSS: Well, good. Well, thank you for that. And I hope you can see from the response, we do take quite seriously what you're talking about in your recommendations and we welcome them. So I'd like to continue the good sort of partnership that we've been having so far.

So, in closing, please provide me by August 23rd with your recommendations about the

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UNWTO since we are on an accelerated time line to make this decision. Our Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism, Phil Lovas, and his team can facilitate your discussions. I look forward to working with you on our joint goal of increasing the number of international visitors to the U.S. and doing everything in our power to support the growth and vitality of your industry.

Thank you, again, for your good advice so far and your service to the industry, to the employees who work for so many of your great organizations and to the country. I leave you in the capable hands of John to lead the rest of the meeting.

Thank you.

CHAIR SPROULS: Thank you, Secretary Ross.

SECRETARY ROSS: Thank you.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: Great, we have more work to do.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: And we have an

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accelerated time line. Oh, what a surprise that that will be for this board.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: So I think what we'd like to do is first get our updates from the federal agencies, then we can open up discussion to the table for all the Board members. So I think I'm going to call upon Ed first.

MR. RAMOTOWSKI: Happy to do it.

Good afternoon, all. Again, I'm Ed Ramotowski, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services at State, and I've worked with the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board for a number of years now. I'd like to just re-emphasize that the Department of State is a full partner in the effort that Secretary Ross outlined to help increase the number of international visitors to the United States. As diplomats we believe/understand both the economic impact and the value towards the diplomatic mission of increasing understanding and good will with other countries that travel and tourism presents. So you can count on us once again

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to do everything that we can to help achieve those goals.

So, going forward and looking at where our visas stand at the moment; worldwide demand is just slightly below what it was last year, which was down from the prior year. And 2016 also was down by about 7 percent. So perhaps we're seeing a plateau, no one can predict the future, but after three straight years of decline there's been indications that things may be leveling off. At the same time the Department of State is dealing with staffing gaps at numerous overseas missions, and that resulted from a 14-month hiring freeze which led to a deficit in consular officers at some of our posts. Secretary Pompeo when he took office rescinded the hiring freeze, but it does take time to train officers, get them onboard and get them out to the field.

So some of the wait times you may be seeing around the world are not where we would like them to be, but we expect that there will be a noticeable improvement in the fall. The summer,

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as veterans of the Board know, is the most challenging time; that's when we see the greatest number of visa applications and we also have the greatest number of transfers and arrivals and departures at our posts.

Talking about infrastructure, our large, new consulate is scheduled to open in Wuhan, China likely in early 2020. And that if the veterans of the Board will remember, that consulate along with the new one in Brazil, was largely driven by the travel industry's advocacy for more points of application for travelers from these large markets. So fingers crossed that everything will go smoothly in China. Those of you who have done business there know that it can be a challenge, but we expect to have that consulate working next year.

We're also expanding our facilities in Shenyang, China to better cope with the demand there, and we're making multi-million dollar investments in India which is a fast-growing source of travelers. We know that Brand USA is going to

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ramp up its marketing in India and so we want to be a full partner in that effort.

We are also committed to working with the Board on other suggestions and ideas that you may have consistent with our national security mission because Job 1 for visa adjudication has always been national security, that's a priority for this administration. There have been a number of directives that we have had to implement and a lot of work done with partner agencies sort of under the counter to make the vetting process more efficient and more secure. So we're certainly better off in terms of security than we were a year or so ago.

We continue to work with Homeland Security in the interest of governments on the Visa Waiver Program. The requirements for that are set by statute; they're not subject to waiver for policy reasons, but we are happy to work with interested governments, which Poland is the most interested at this point to meet the requirements of them all. And of course, as you know, a visa waiver does serve

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as a -- it tends to increase travel.

So we're continuing to work that and we've also worked closely with members of the Board on what's called meetings, incentive conferences and exhibition, MICE for short, travel. Principally from China, but again, these are massive groups of individuals who travel for a convention or as reward for their work. And so we are continuing to work with our mission in China to adjudicate those as carefully as possible but recognizing the value that they represent for industry.

So, with that, I will see if there's anyone else from State, any of my colleagues that want to speak about their aspect of the department.

Hearing none, I turn it back over to you, John.

CHAIR SPROULS: Thank you, Ed. Thank you. Next we'll hear from Alex Zemek who is the Assistant Secretary, Office of Threat Protection and Security Policy.

MR. ZEMEK: Hey, Alex Zemek, Deputy

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Assistant Secretary at DHS. And up until three months ago I worked for Secretary Ross' Chief of Staff in his Bureau of Industry and Security, so it's coming back home in some respects for me here, so delighted to join your group here today and I want to convey DHS' commitment towards facilitating travel to the United States, as well as advocating for the safety of the homeland. And I think we're exploring a variety of fronts to do that and leveraging technology to support both the security and efficiencies that can go along with the travel continuum and sort of the aspect of securing a homeland plan and promoting safe and lawful travel to the United States. We do that for a variety of different projects.

I know Ed touched upon the Visa Waiver Program. My boss, the Assistant Secretary, we're traveling out later this month to Poland in sort of a pre-assessment mission to see how things are going along there with their desire to qualify for the program and it is one that over 23 million people, I think, each year from the 38 different

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Visa Waiver Programs travel to the U.S., and that produces almost -- you guys know better, but I think almost \$200 billion a year in some of the economic activity and support so many jobs.

So we certainly are eager for more countries to qualify and are trying to come up with plans to work with them so that they can try to meet the requirements by statute and regulation. And we're working with aspirant countries; I've met recently with MC from Croatia and some other interested EU states that are not yet members of the VWP Program. And then we're also looking at ways where DHS can make it easier for trusted travelers from third parties to cross our borders and through our airport security.

I know Secretary Ross referred to the law enforcement officer, I know Mr. Davies over there and the fine people from CBP are some of the first faces that travelers to the U.S. come across at our ports of entries both in their professionalism as well as I know programs that CPB has -- and after I'll turn it over in case anyone

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else from DHS wants to add things, but programs like global entry are both effective from a security standpoint as well as aid with the speed of someone's experience in an airport or port of entry.

And we're committed to and continuing to explore how we can deploy technology such as biometrics to improve both security and travel facilitation, CBP's current biometric exit pilots are using facial recognition technology and that may usher in fewer choke points at some of the lines as well as better identity confirmation. And they have a variety of different pilot programs that they're working on with TSA and some of the airline operations and airports on that to try to see if that's something that can be further expanded.

And then we have pre-clearance programs that are sort of CBP pre-positioned in more than six countries in a variety of major ports of departure towards the U.S., and that represents roughly 16 percent of all travel coming to the U.S., and that's something that we think has been effective and we're exploring the process that

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obviously deals with multiple jurisdictions in different countries, multiple different parties.

So that's a continued effort to try to expand that and I know that there's some commitments in the work. And then would also, more on the domestic front, but I guess I'd be remiss, one of the programs that falls under me is the Real ID Program, the Real ID Act, just use it as an opportunity to welcome any assistance from those in the, either aviation, airline, tourism industry as far as reminding travelers of the upcoming deadline of October 1st, 2020 for all air travelers in the U.S. to have appropriate Real ID compliant identification for the air travel.

Does Mr. Davies or any others from DHS want to add on to --

CHAIR SPROULS: Alex, just a couple questions, sir. Do you have any statistics about the growth of global entry, how many people we have now -- is it continuing to grow as it has over the last two years?

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MR. ZEMEK: I will see if there's more up-to-date data, but from what I can tell it has back -- I think what I originally saw -- even these automated means, some of these trusted traveler programs, it was about 3 percent growth in FY13 to over 50 percent in FY17. I think it's more than 7 million passengers are using some of the various trusted traveler programs with global entry sort of being the flagship there. I think in FY17 there were 1.4 new million travelers to global entry, so it seemed as if it was in a -- I want to say geometric growth -- but it was more than just a level -- I don't know if you have any statistics from your end?

MR. DAVIES: I don't have any specific statistics. I think that from a general perspective we continue to see an increase in global entry, but we've had some challenges recently where we've down-staffed our global entry offices because of the deployment of some of our officers to the southern border locations, so that has had an impact for us this year in terms of the enrollments. We've

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seen pre-qual entry. I think we also work very closely with CBP and TSA because we see a large percentage of passengers, travelers who seek to enroll in global entry who actually do not intend to travel internationally. They're using it for the pre-check privileges, so we try to coordinate some of those passengers with TSA and provide the benefits that the traveling public require as necessary.

CHAIR SPROULS: On the Real ID, I know at one point there were several states that still hadn't bothered to get their driver's licenses compliant. Are there still some out there?

MR. ZEMEK: Yes, of the 50 states and the six territories, 56 in total, I want to say as of this month we are at -- it's right around 50 compliant, so we have almost all of them compliant. I think July we were going to see a few, later this month a few coming in. The two laggards do happen to be --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. DAVIES: Right across from you.

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(Laughter.)

MR. ZEMEK: Oregon and Oklahoma I think are the two that are expected to be pretty late in the cycle. But we --

MEMBER DAVIDSON: If only I had absolute power.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: Great, thank you. I don't know if you had any other questions for Alex?

MEMBER TALBERT: Hey, John, their granting visa waiver status to all Americans, I don't know the answer to this -- does that make it any easier or tougher?

MR. ZEMEK: It certainly is one of the -- we're not going -- that program is not going to be a visa waiver from a U.S. -- they're not going to be a Visa Waiver Program if they don't do that. So certainly doing that is a good thing, a helpful thing, but that in and of itself is not --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MEMBER TALBERT: It's a good thing.

MR. ZEMEK: Yes.

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MEMBER TALBERT: It's a simple process.

MR. ZEMEK: Yes.

CHAIR SPROULS: Great. Thank you, Alex. Next we're going to hear from -- Bronte, I don't want to mispronounce your last name -- Wigen?

MS. WIGEN: Wigen, yes.

CHAIR SPROULS: Wigen, okay. So Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Administration.

MS. WIGEN: Great. Well, thanks. First off, thank you for the recommendations provided in your letter; we're taking those under consideration. And I'd like to highlight some of the work we're doing in apprenticeship area. So first days in June we put out the notice for a public proposed rulemaking for industry recognized apprenticeship program, that's currently open for a 60-day public comment period.

The NPRM reflects the key recommendations from the Task Force on

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Apprenticeship Expansion's file report. And once that public comment window closes, we'll be reviewing all those comments, but we would greatly appreciate input on them. Also in June the department awarded \$183 million in grants to partnerships, public and private, for apprenticeship expansion. So those were awarded to higher education entities and we've partnered with businesses. We also, as the secretary mentioned, we put out a funding opportunity for \$100 million for apprenticeship expansion and that grant is currently open on grants.gov and I'm happy to share that link.

And also in the spring the Department put out \$73 million in funding to the states, and the primary purpose of that grant opportunity was for the expansion of registered programs across the nation.

And then, additionally, in 2018 the Department launched apprenticeship.gov; the website serves as a portal for career seekers, business leaders, educators and parents about

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apprenticeships. And on that website we have specifically a page on hospitality, but we're all ears for other ideas or other resources that you think would be useful. Also on the website we have an apprenticeship finder tool which has the option to search by location or occupation for open apprenticeship opportunities. And there's also a way for businesses to input their open apprenticeship opportunities that are both registered and unregistered programs in that database. And we've also recently launched a partner finder tool which allows employers and educators the ability to see all registered apprenticeship programs and the training providers that exist currently.

And then specifically related to tourism travel, over the past three years the Department's partnered with the National Restaurant Apprenticeship Educational Foundation and the American Hotel and Lodging Association. I know this was highlighted in the Advisory Board's letter, but it's worth highlighting again since

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it's been an extremely successful program and we're looking forward to continuing that. And from its inception that program is to highlight, it's across the country with over 1,000 apprentices and with a 96 percent retention rate.

So those are just a few of the examples of the things we're working on and we're looking forward to continuing our work.

CHAIR SPROULS: That's terrific. Any questions?

Thank you, all. And Phil, I apologize for not calling upon you to see if you had any comments before we got going on the meeting. But I will give you the floor now.

(Laughter.)

MR. LOVAS: Thank you, John. I just want to say thank you to our partners and the other agencies for being here today. As I've mentioned before, we are kind of the coordinating role at commerce, but every agency plays a role in travel and tourism and everything to do with visas to protecting the borders, to workforce development,

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goes a long way in terms of bringing more international travelers into the United States.

So I just want to say thank you to them for being here, appreciate the attendance of everyone here. We've had a good year, the secretary touched on the importance of a national goal and where we're headed with that. And so we think we're in good shape going forward, and again we just appreciate your participation and the private sector input because we understand it's those of you in the private sector who creates the jobs and we are there to try and open doors and to try to be a help to you in that pursuit.

CHAIR SPROULS: Great, thank you. Thank you. At this point I would like to open up the floor to an open discussion for all Board members on any topic you wish.

MEMBER DEAN: Mr. Chairman, could I just offer something? I'm not sure it's relevant for discussion, but I do want to take the opportunity to let Phil know that on behalf of Discover Puerto Rico and the people we represent

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your team have been incredibly helpful.

And Isabel, Curt, Julie, the entire team have been very proactive, responsive and incredibly helpful and I think a big part of the reason why tourism has come back so quickly in Puerto Rico. And we often don't take the time to say thank you, but I want to acknowledge the efforts of the entire team and particularly those individuals that have gone above and beyond to help us, and it's having a major impact and a very positive impact. We just want to say thank you.

CHAIR SPROULS: That's great. How is business for everybody?

VICE CHAIR EKERT: It's good.

MEMBER TALBERT: Send us some customers, John, please.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: With all due respect, though, if they come to Florida I'm not sending any of them to you.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: I'm just going to be

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totally brutally honest.

MEMBER TALBERT: Thank you, sir.

CHAIR SPROULS: Brian, do we have any public comment?

MR. BEALL: We do actually have one public comment registered in advance from Brand USA.

CHAIR SPROULS: All right.

MR. WODIN-SCHWARTZ: Good afternoon, everybody. It's good to see everyone here. I'll just be very brief. I just wanted to say that obviously having been a veteran of many of these meetings as an observer for many years, it's just great to see all the quick work and the great work the Board is doing. With respect specifically to the new national goal, we're excited to see that. We understand, of course, the importance of the national goal.

We see the organizing principle that it has brought to the table in these past seven years now, and we understand our role in helping you achieve it as a public/private partnership. I believe we're called out in certain sections of

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the recommendation of the strategy itself at the moment. And so we look forward to working with the Board and working with our partners, both our industry partners and our government partners, and of course all the channels that we have in our key markets around the world helping you achieve and work toward that ambitious goal. And so we look forward to working with everybody on that. And always open to any questions that anybody has for us.

We simply just wanted to state that, and looking forward to seeing how the strategy is revised and how we can continue to support that work.

CHAIR SPROULS: Great, any questions?

MEMBER PRIMROSE: I would just add -- just to echo Ed -- and I know with the letter laid out with respect to the goal, the importance of Brand USA -- but for more perspective, it's one of the most powerful tools in our arsenal as we think about getting to the \$116 million. I think the other thing I would just point out is the Visa

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Waiver Program, really appreciate the comments earlier on that. I think, again, another tool for us. I mean, we listed many, but those two really rise from our perspective.

CHAIR SPROULS: No, I agree. And I think we use everyone at the committee because the committee can't do it themselves, but our individual companies have to be finding out how they can best support keeping Brand USA funded. And getting the Visa Waiver Program to have a new name.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR SPROULS: It is the best program with the worst name because we constantly explain, no it's not a waiver. So I think we have to as individuals/companies work towards both of those goals, because I agree with you, they're both incredibly important to us hitting the national goal.

MEMBER PRIMROSE: Totally. Excellent point, John. Thanks.

MR. BEALL: Thank you. Are there any

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other members of the public who want to offer a comment during today's meeting?

MR. SHORT: Thank you. Actually, I'm not a member of the public. I'm David Short, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation and International Affairs. And if it would be helpful, I'd be happy to give a quick update on where we are in the Open Skies, because I think we have some very positive developments to share.

As all of you know, our administration has been in office for two and a half years now and during that time we have concluded nine new Open Skies agreements, and I'm especially proud of that because the low-hanging fruit disappeared a long time ago. So to add nine in that short -- which I think is close to a record in, what are we talking, 30 months to do nine agreements with nine new countries -- I'm very pleased with what my staff has done and very proud of that.

And the most recent one was signed by Secretary Chao, the Secretary of Transportation, not quite three weeks ago, with Argentina which

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is one of the last large markets, large potential in-bound tourism markets that was not covered by Open Skies. So we are really pleased to have nailed that down. And Argentina has an election coming up later this year, you never know, I'm certainly not going to speculate about how that's going to play out, but we have very good relationship with the current administration in Argentina. We got the agreement done and we were pleased Secretary Chao and her counterpart, the Argentine Minister of Transport, were able to sign that here in Washington the last week of June.

Also on Brexit, we negotiated about six, seven months ago an agreement with the UK that if and when Brexit happens, aviation will not be affected. Everything will continue just as it has without skipping a beat, so passengers can book their flights with confidence. There will be no disruption to air service and it will actually be a better agreement that we have now with the EU covering the UK; it will give us some additional rights for U.S. cargo carriers, which are probably

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not of too much interest to this group, but also it will extend Open Skies for the first time ever to the British overseas territories and the Crown dependencies.

And so this may be a little more the outbound tourism, but points like Cayman Islands, Bermuda, BVI, et cetera have never been covered by Open Skies. They're actually covered today by an antiquated agreement called Bermuda II from the 1970's which is actually very restrictive. Once -- if Brexit happens -- once it happens -- they'll be a part of Open Skies and U.S. and their carriers will have the freedom to fly wherever the market dictates.

And just finally I would say, some of you may be aware if Japan is an important source market for you. We have a very important proceeding that we're in the course of wrapping up now. My office was successful about six months ago in concluding negotiations to triple the access, triple the number of flights between Haneda, Tokyo/Haneda, which is the most popular

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airport in Japan, and the U.S. We have been limited to six flights a day, we're going next year to 18 flights a day, so this is -- if I may say, this is huge.

While we're really happy, we negotiated 12 new flights, we got applications for 19. So we couldn't grab them all and the order is still not final, but there is a show cause order that outlines the tentative decision.

And I see Max Slutsky from United is over here, I think his company, according to the show cause, would get four new routes from Washington and Dallas to Newark, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Have I got that right? I can't remember all 12, but that's United and Dallas/Fort Worth is slated to get -- it's a new service by American Airlines non-stop from DFW to Haneda, and many other cities. We've got -- two have been given to Honolulu, so that's going to be primarily inbound tourism to the United States and all the services that have been authorized for Los Angeles, for different gateways, they will all be bringing

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tourism. I can say that for sure. And some in particular like Honolulu have especially great potential to boost in-bound tourism.

So that's the report that I can share today and thank you for the invitation to be with you.

CHAIR SPROULS: And thank you for that report. That was fabulous. Great.

PARTICIPANT: No other public comment?

CHAIR SPROULS: No other public comment.

PARTICIPANT: I think we're good.

CHAIR SPROULS: Okay, great. So talking about next steps, obviously we were -- oh, I'm sorry.

MS. WILLS WRIGHT: I just wanted to introduce myself because -- is that okay?

CHAIR SPROULS: Yes.

MS. WILLS WRIGHT: I'm Kathy Wills Wright, I'm the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for international organizations. So I'm the spy in the meeting listening to everything on whether

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-- as we decide whether we will or won't go back into the World Tourism Organization. So we do look forward to hearing from you because we don't take these things lightly looking at this, but if it's good for the added states and it's good for the country, for each of the states it's good for the country, and we've talked a lot about that with commerce. And so we are soliciting thoughts. I'd love to hear them all.

CHAIR SPROULS: Great. Well, that was going to be my next point which is we are going to create a subcommittee of the Board to do the heavy lifting to be able to gather the information from the industry to be able to make whatever recommendations. And I'm very pleased to tell everyone that Kurt, our Vice Chair, has agreed to chair that subcommittee and make that happen.

So I will turn it over to you.

VICE CHAIR EKERT: Thanks, John. And I'm excited about the opportunity, and it's a big deal making sure we get this right. Now I'm excited that we have some esteemed members of the Board

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who are joining in the subcommittee -- Russ Hedge, Pam Inman, Bryan Saltzburg, Rob Torres, and Ernie Wooden. And so what I would encourage everybody is if anyone else on the Board is interested in being part of this formally or even sharing your ideas, tell Brian Beall, we'll immediately include you. And the National Travel Tourism Office will be coordinating a meeting within the next week to kick us off, even though that we have a relatively tight time frame, but really looking forward to the process over the next month.

CHAIR SPROULS: Great, thank you. And we should anticipate and I know Brian will mention, we should anticipate our next meeting being a teleconference which would be to review whatever recommendations we have coming from Kurt's subcommittee that we would then forward onto commerce and to the rest of the administration with the board's position on the issue.

So is there anything else to come before the committee?

MR. DAVIDSON: If I could, just one

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quick question; I noted with great interest the secretary's comments about the Tourism Policy Council and embracing the national goal. And the work was going to commence on a revised national travel and tourism strategy, and I'm curious about if there's any input or perspective that our colleagues from the NTTD can share regarding the time line from that, any potential for engagement from the Board, any way we can be helpful as that's coming together?

MR. LOVAS: Well, thank you for those comments, appreciate it. Yes, the Tourism Policy Council met, as he mentioned on June 25th, and I believe he directed the agencies to provide feedback to our office by August 23rd. So we're expecting to get feedback from the various departments by then, and then we can take that initial feedback and certainly share it at that point.

MEMBER DAVIDSON: Great. Yes, so we would be prepared, obviously whatever you need us to do with respect to that.

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CHAIR SPROULS: Great. Thanks,
thanks for bringing that up.

Anybody else?

If not, I'll turn it back to you, Brian.

MR. BEALL: All right. As John just mentioned, one housekeeping item; we will have our next TTAB meeting by teleconference, likely around August 23rd, the date the secretary requested the letter. We will follow up soon with information on that meeting date and time. It will be via teleconference, so no travel required for that one, but look for updates from us on that front.

And, assuming no further comments, I think that concludes today's Board meeting. Thank you all so much for coming.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:00 p.m.)

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