

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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U.S. TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

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MEETING

+ + + + +

**WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 16, 2015
12:00 P.M. CT**

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Moderator: Archana Sahgal

1 Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. This conference is now being
2 recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. All
3 lines will be open for the duration of today's conference.
4
5 Please utilize your mute function or press star 6 to mute and then unmute your
6 lines. I would now like to turn the conference over to Archana. Thank you,
7 you may begin.
8

1 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Operator Karen. As Chair Gilliland said, I'm going to start with a
2 roll call. Thank you. Holly Agra? David Berg?
3
4 David Berg: Hello?
5
6 Archana Sahgal: Good morning, David. Is that you?
7
8 David Berg: Good morning or good afternoon.
9
10 Archana Sahgal: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us. Darrell Bryan? Henry Cruz? Todd
11 Davidson? Brad Dean?
12
13 Brad Dean: Yes, I'm here.
14
15 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Brad. Fred Dixon?
16
17 (Monica): He'll be joining shortly. This is his assistant, (Monica).
18
19 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Monica. Maryann Ferenc? Elliot Ferguson? Don Freeman? Mike
20 Gallagher?
21
22 Mike Gallagher: Here.
23
24 Archana Sahgal: Good Afternoon, Mike. Thank you.
25
26 Archana Sahgal: Good Afternoon.
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28 Mike Gallagher: Actually, it's morning. I'm in Napa.
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30 Archana Sahgal: Good morning to you. Sam Gilliland?

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Sam Gilliland: Yes, I'm here.

Archana Sahgal: (Dave Pegan) is not available. Barney Harford, who is no longer on the council. Kirk Hoessle?

Kirk Hoessle: Yes, I'm here.

Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Kirk. Jeremy Jacobs?

Jeremy Jacobs: I'm here.

Archana Sahgal: Thank you. Bob Lynch?

Bob Lynch: Hi. This is Bob Lynch.

Archana Sahgal: Good Afternoon and thank you, Bob. Michael McCormick?

(Shane): Hi this is (Shane). He'll be joining shortly.

Archana Sahgal: Thank you (Shane). Margaret McKeough?

Henry Cruz: Hello?

Archana Sahgal: Hi Henry. Thank you for joining us. We'll just in the middle of roll call and I have noted your participation. Margaret McKeough?

(Debbie Levin): Margaret - this is (Debbie Levin). Margaret is not going to be able to join us. But I'll listen in and share with her what we do today.

1 Archana Sahgal: Wonderful, thank you (Debbie). Brian Mullis?

2

3 Brian Mullis: Here.

4

5 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Brian. Rossi Ralenkotter?

6

7 (Valerie Sigara): This is (Valerie Sigara) for Rossi Ralenkotter.

8

9 Archana Sahgal: Thank you (Valerie). Olga Ramudo? Trudy Rautio? Dean Runyan? Sherry
10 Rupert? John Sprouis?

11

12 John Sprouis: I'm here.

13

14 Archana Sahgal: Hi John. Greg Stubblefield?

15

16 (Brian Rockfree): (Brian Rockfree)'s here for Greg.

17

18 Archana Sahgal: Thank you (Brian). Carol Wallace? Jonathan Zuk?

19

20 Jonathan Zuk: Here. Good Afternoon.

21

22 Archana Sahgal: Good afternoon. And now for our Ex Officio members. If there are staff
23 representing Ex Officio members, please let us know. We'll start from the
24 Secretary of State's Office.

25

26 Mike Ritchie: This is Mike Ritchie from the Visa Office.

27

28 Archana Sahgal: Thanks, Mike.

29

30 (Ryan Long): From Upstate Economic Bureau.

1

2 Archana Sahgal: Hi Mike. Hi (Ryan). Secretary of Interior's Office?

3

4 (Nikki Bisson): (Nikki Bisson) for John Blair.

5

6 Archana Sahgal: Thank you (Nikki). Secretary of Transportation's Office?

7

8 Vanessa Balgobin: Vanessa Balgobin.

9

10 Archana Sahgal: Hi Vanessa. Thank you so much for joining us. And Secretary Johnson's
11 Office from the Department of Homeland Security?

12

13 (Steve Redlare): (Steve Redlare).

14

15 Archana Sahgal: Hi (Steve). Thank you so much.

16

17 (Steve Redlare): No problem.

18

19 Archana Sahgal: And from the National Travel and Tourism Office?

20

21 (Kelly Crayton): (Kelly Crayton).

22

23 Archana Sahgal: Welcome (Kelly). Thank you so much.

24

25 (Roderman): (Roderman).

26

27 Archana Sahgal: Good morning (Raul).

28

29 (Dick Champie): Hi (Dick). Welcome. Thank you so much.

30

1 (Dick Champlic): Good morning. Good morning.

2

3 Archana Sahgal: And with that, that concludes the roll call. But I wanted to add just in case
4 anyone has joined us on call that I did not capture...

5

6 Holly Agra: This is Holly Agra. I missed the A's. Sorry.

7

8 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Holly. I have you noted as well. Anyone else join?

9

10 Daniella Landau: Daniella Landau.

11

12 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Daniella. And with that, that concludes roll call. I turn it back over
13 to Chair Gilliland.

14

15 Chair Sam Gilliland: Okay. Well thanks, Archana. Thanks everybody for joining the call today.
16 Let me start by apologizing in advance. I'm in an airport so it may - if there's
17 background noise, apologies for that. But I do appreciate you getting together
18 with us here today. I thought I'd just provide a little perspective on the letter
19 that we're going to go through here today.

20

21 And potentially approve if everybody's comfortable with it. First, I guess
22 when we were first contemplating putting this letter together, and you may
23 recall, I think it was Dave Berg's idea to offer up our support as an Advisory
24 Board for the Visa Waiver Program when we were all asked together in
25 Washington D.C.

26

27 And we decided that it made sense to put this letter together as we
28 contemplated the amount of time that has to - the time duration that's required
29 of our TTAB process within Department of Commerce.

30

1 We found that we really had to wait until today to have this call. And we were
2 all a little bit concerned about whether the train might have left the station at
3 that point in time.

4
5 We concluded that it made sense to go forward and I have some indication
6 that Secretary Pritzker is very much looking forward to getting our views as
7 an Advisory Board.

8
9 And in fact since that time, as you all know we've seen a few bills that have
10 been introduced. One that was passed overwhelmingly in the House of
11 Representatives that was introduced by Representative Miller around the Visa
12 Waiver Program.

13
14 And again you could say has the train - has the train left the station? In fact, I
15 think many of you that have studied the bill that Representative Miller
16 introduced would say that bill does make sense.

17
18 And it offers up some sensible changes and even emphasis on existing
19 requirements of the Visa Waiver Program that I think the industry has felt
20 were sensible and, in fact, U.S. Travel offered up its support as well as a
21 number of industry members.

22
23 That bill was approved and (Bruce) you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I
24 believe that bill is in the omnibus that will be set forth for a vote. I think it's
25 Friday. Is that right (Bruce)?

26
27 (Bruce): Yes. Yes. Yes. You got it.

28

1 Chair Sam Gilliland: So we have that bill. It's certainly on its way and I think we all feel good
2 about the tenets of that bill. And we can jump into some of the details if
3 anybody is interested here on the call.

4
5 There is another bill that has been introduced by Senator Feinstein, which we
6 do have concerns about. Because it introduces requirements that we think will
7 put a slowdown on the process and make it more expensive for travelers.

8
9 And offers other layers and it has concepts for layering and additional security
10 requirements that we I think - we believe as we've reviewed it, don't really
11 offer up really any help in terms of security and safety of passengers. And that
12 bill will go to markup in January, as I understand it. And again (Bruce) correct
13 me if I'm wrong on that. I think that's the case.

14
15 (Bruce): I don't know if it's definitely January, but Chairman Grassley has told Senator
16 Feinstein that her bill will be marked up next year, and so I think our views on
17 Visa Waiver broadly as a Board will be quite helpful going into that markup.

18
19 And in other discussions that may happen within the Administration about
20 Visa Waiver. I don't think that what Congress does is part of the Omnibus is
21 going to be the last word on Visa Waiver.

22
23 Chair Sam Gilliland: Right so and, in fact, the Administration has also offered its support for
24 this bill, which is referred to in our letter as HR-158, as well. So I think there's
25 good alignment between what we're seeking, what the administration is
26 seeking, and what this bill from Congressman - Congressperson Miller is
27 offering up as well.

28

1 So that's the backdrop, and I think as we have talked with the Department of
2 Commerce. It's clear that our support will be helpful as these bills come
3 forward and as future bills may come forward.

4
5 And again the concern that we've had is that there might be a reactionary
6 approaches here to what had happens both in France and also in San
7 Bernardino. San Bernardino reactionary and perhaps less thoughtful
8 approaches in bills that are introduced that wouldn't be helpful in terms - that
9 wouldn't add any value in terms of security.

10
11 But would certainly diminish the opportunity for international visitation or, at
12 least, make it harder. So that's really the backdrop for the letter that I think
13 many of you have seen and reviewed.

14
15 And I appreciate the comments that you have set forth for that letter. Before I
16 jump into going through that letter, and I'll walk through it very quickly. John
17 Sprouls, do you have any comments before we jump in?

18
19 John Sprouls: No Sam I think you've covered it well. I would just jump right into the letter.

20
21 Chair Sam Gilliland: Okay. All right. So why don't we do that and I'll do it quickly. And again I
22 think most of you have seen the letter. And I'm not going to go through this
23 word for word. It's not a very long letter that you'll see there in paragraph one
24 that we have offered our solidarity with France for the events that had occurred
25 there.

26
27 And certainly our desire to - our desire for our government and our legislature
28 to react thoughtfully and deliberately around what occurred there. And in that
29 paragraph, there were a few wording suggestions that I think we have adopted.
30 If not, you know, word for word, at least in spirit.

1
2 And so I don't think and Archana, I'm going to ask you to correct me if I miss
3 anything here because I wasn't able to print out the - for some reason I wasn't
4 able to print out the edits that had come in through the Google Docs.

5
6 But I think we've captured the word changes in there. The one thing I might
7 add or I might change in terms of verbiage is in terms of the second to last
8 sentence the very end.

9
10 We did change a word from paralyze I think to jeopardize. But that last little
11 phrase there to jeopardize all that has been accomplished to increase our
12 visitor numbers. I would just change visitor numbers. I would recommend that
13 we change to international visitation.

14
15 It's something that I noted this morning as I looked at it. So that's a
16 modification that I would suggest. So let's continue on through the letter and I
17 will offer up anything else that - any other changes that we have adopted that
18 have come through. And again I don't think there's anything of substance or
19 even word changes that we didn't adopt from what came through Google
20 Docs.

21
22 The second paragraph is really getting at concerns specifically around the
23 impacts to the Visa Waiver Program and bills being introduced in Congress,
24 and again we're seeing that happening live here over the course of this month
25 and maybe the next couple of months.

26
27 And so this long paragraph that you see in this printout which I think is
28 intended to be a couple of paragraphs. And we - I think have some formatting
29 issues in here, and so I might suggest that we have a paragraph break in here

1 before the sentence that starts with on behalf of the U.S. Travel and Tourism
2 and Advisory Board.

3
4 And secondly within that large paragraph as you get down to the bottom
5 (unintelligible) paragraphs that we say we understand the highest priority of
6 our government. I think there should be a paragraph break there as well.

7
8 And then as you'll see - as you've seen and noted as you read through this
9 paragraph, the crux of it bears in the middle which is we're writing this special
10 and urgent letter to encourage the Administration to continue to oppose
11 legislation that could undermine security and seriously disrupt international
12 travel in commerce.

13
14 And support legislation such as the legislation I mentioned earlier, HR-158.
15 That would preserve the Visa Waiver Program will also strengthen security,
16 and again we think 158 will do that. So that's the - that's really the heart of
17 what we have in that next paragraph and along with encouragement to the
18 Administration again to continue its support for those things.

19
20 That will enhance as opposed to will detract from all that the Visa Waiver
21 Program does. The last paragraph - I'm sorry. We did have a sentence in here,
22 and this again gets back to the edits. There was a sentence in here that said the
23 overreactions towards the end of this paragraph, overreactions to bad events
24 can make for - make for bad laws.

25
26 We changed that to say overreactions to bad events can make for bad laws and
27 again based on feedback from this group. And then the last paragraph is just
28 capturing our views on what is problematic and what was helpful in terms of
29 measures that could be introduced.

30

1 And then a final bit in the final paragraph a bit of encouragement, again
2 around the Visa Waiver Program to the Secretary. So that's the summary
3 version, and again Archana correct me if I'm wrong, but I think we have
4 adopted at least in spirit and maybe even to the letter, the recommended
5 changes that we got through Google Docs. Is that right?
6

7 Archana Sahgal: That is correct. You and your team did a great job of incorporating both the
8 copy edits as well as some of the word choice questions as well as some of the
9 handful of substantive edits around word choice as well. Thank you.
10

11 Chair Sam Gilliland: So I would just offer up to the group then any further questions or
12 concerns that you might have around the letter. The text, any additional
13 changes that you would suggest.
14

15 Man: Looks good to me.
16

17 Chair Sam Gilliland: Okay.
18

19 David Berg: Sam, this is Dave Berg. I think the letter's great and I really appreciate - hi - I
20 really appreciate your folks jumping on this so quickly. I think it's important
21 that we get this over to the Secretary. So thank you for that.
22

23 Chair Sam Gilliland: Yes and I really appreciate the suggestion during the meeting Dave. I
24 think it was a really good one. I'm pleased we're able to get this - get this into
25 the Secretary on a timely basis.
26

27 It will be helpful to her as she advocates on our behalf and on better behalf of
28 better safety and security, but also on behalf of, you know, continuing to
29 improve the international visitation numbers.
30

1 Okay. Well if there aren't any further comments, then I guess I would - we can
2 go to the formal part which is simply for me to ask if there are any objections
3 to adopting the new recommendations. So that's a question for the group, any
4 objections?

5
6 Group: No.

7
8 Chair Sam Gilliland: Then I proclaim the recommendations adopted by the TTAB and said
9 adopted with the minor set of changes that we talked about, you know, over
10 the course of the call.

11
12 And I guess then the recommendations have been adopted, and again we will
13 make the edits that have been suggested on this call and Archana unless there
14 is any other process related issues or anything else that you'd like to talk
15 about, I think we're done with the substance of the call. Is that right?

16
17 Archana Sahgal: That's correct. Thank you so much, Chair.

18
19 Holly Agra: This is Holly. May I ask a question?

20
21 Chair Sam Gilliland: Sure.

22
23 Holly Agra: Do you think the members of the Advisory Board should write personal letters,
24 company letters to Representative Miller?

25
26 Chair Sam Gilliland: Well I can't suggest as a part of the TTAB - I can't suggest that you do that
27 as, kind of, a formal matter. I do think that as individuals and representing our
28 own companies aside from and actually separate from our participation on the
29 TTAB that that is very helpful. I know there are a number of companies on
30 this call that have already done that type of thing. So...

1
2 Holly Agra: Thank you.

3
4 Archana Sahgal: Chair Gilliland I just wanted to jump in, and that is correct. Obviously,
5 industry leaders are welcome to do anything in their own individual capacity.
6 But as a member of the Travel and Advisory Board -

7
8 Any recommendations must flow through the TTAB, and they go directly to
9 the Secretary. So just a reminder that individual members are welcome to do
10 anything in their own individual capacity. Thank you.

11
12 Chair Sam Gilliland: And it were me in my own individual capacity, I'd be very supportive of
13 what you described.

14
15 Holly Agra: Okay, thank you.

16
17 Jonathan Zuk: Sam, this is Jonathan. Just one second, I want to jump in with one other thing.
18 Just as a sidebar as chairman of say we sent all our members a similar letter
19 and they all sent it out.

20
21 And then our company sent it out as well. But, my question is more since the
22 session is now ended and we're just basically disbanding as this thing goes on
23 and maybe there might be something before the new board has been elected
24 some sort of reaction.

25
26 I mean is it legal for us to respond to something before the new board is
27 elected if somebody comes up with some other idea that we want to support or
28 oppose. Can we issue another letter in January before the new board is elected
29 or appointed or whatever? Can we do something further than just this letter, if
30 need be?

1
2 Chair Sam Gilliland: Archana, I'm going to have to lean on you on that one.

3
4 Archana Sahgal: Thank you, Jonathan. Thank you Chair. So the TTAB - so our understanding
5 and our conversation is that this the final TTAB meeting of your term. I
6 understand that this is a huge important issue to the Travel and Tourism
7 Industry and as Chair Gilliland just referenced you are welcome to write
8 individual letters.

9
10 If there are as we are closing this term, if there are very important issues that
11 come up similar to the Visa Waiver Program Recommendation, I would
12 welcome a conversation about how to move forward.

13
14 Thinking about timing, thinking about FR notices and setting a date for
15 another public meeting in the winter in the year of 2016, so like I said I'm
16 open to this conversation. I just would welcome a conversation about it.

17
18 Chair Sam Gilliland: Okay. Okay. So we just need to communicate with you if further issues
19 come up in advance of the next four convenient meetings. So we'll keep our
20 eyes out as a board and if it's issues like that we can...

21
22 Jonathan Zuk: Sorry Sam I couldn't let you off the hook so easily. But you know...

23
24 Chair Sam Gilliland: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Of course. Of course.

25
26 Dave Berg: Hey Sam, this is Dave Berg. If I could go back to Holly's question for a
27 second. I think individual letters are great, but more particularly to Senator
28 Feinstein rather than to mail. Because Feinstein's is the bill that would be
29 problematic. So if anyone is interested in taking action, I recommend that they
30 make sure Feinstein knows that...

1
2 Holly Agra: Do we have a bill number on hers?
3
4 Man: Yes, hang on.
5
6 Man: I don't know if it's been introduced.
7
8 Man: I'll find out what I can and let you know Holly.
9
10 Holly Agra: Okay that sounds great.
11
12 Chair Sam Gilliland: Okay anything - any other comments on the board? Okay then we will
13 adjourn the meeting, and I will again express my appreciation to everybody
14 for their commitment to this term and also wish you all a fantastic holiday
15 season.
16
17 I hope you have a relaxing and enjoyable one. And I'll look forward to
18 crossing paths with you at some point in the future. So have a great holiday.
19 Thanks, everybody.
20
21 Group: Thanks, Sam. Thank you.
22
23
24 END