



## UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary of Commerce  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB) appreciates your interest in the Secure Travel Partnership concept that was discussed at our last meeting. We believe the comprehensive set of measures designed to keep Americans and our visitors safe are both necessary and important. We also believe a strategic, interagency communication plan designed to increase understanding of these measures will help ensure a better, safer travel experience and support the efforts of the public and private sectors in growing inbound travel to the United States.

Our recommendations are predicated upon the premise that the administration is evolving its national security strategy and that the communication of those policies in the travel context must also evolve. Effective policy communications and “marketing the welcome” will aid in smoother implementation and ensure that the world views the United States as a welcoming destination of limitless possibilities that protects the safety of more than 75 million visitors from around the world each year. Moreover, a secure travel environment is critical to the continued economic success of the United States to make visitors feel welcome as well as to continue to attract travelers throughout the world to enjoy the wide variety of exceptional experiences available throughout our nation. If visitors don’t feel welcome, then it’s unlikely they will feel safe and vice versa. In short, clear communication of security measures is critical to the ability of the United States to welcome visitors, expand travel & tourism exports and grow our nation’s visitor economy. We also believe these recommendations align well with those made by the TTAB National Goal Subcommittee.

### **Recommendations**

#### **IMPLEMENT AN INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP**

We recommend that you, in your role as leader of the Tourism Policy Council (TPC), establish an Interagency Communications Working Group that is focused on how we “market the welcome.” We envision participation in this working group to resemble that of the Tourism Policy Council (TPC).

The primary purpose of the working group would be to identify overall communication themes and tactics to effectively roll out policy changes that impact global travelers. The working group could enhance promotional synergy among federal agencies and help ensure consistency of message amongst different agency messengers in advance of policy announcements. The working group should make full use of the tools at its disposal, including public-private partnerships (e.g. Brand USA), industry partners (e.g. US Travel Association) and the global network of federal communications channels. The inclusion of these groups will provide additional messaging channels for policy changes and also strengthen the messaging through sound research and input from affected stakeholders.

### **COMMUNICATE A COMMON BRAND IDENTITY OF THE SECURE TRAVEL PARTNERSHIP**

We recommend you direct the Interagency Communications Working Group to pursue development of a strategy to succinctly communicate the general purpose and benefits of key trusted traveler and other travel-related programs (e.g. TSA Pre-Check, Visa Waiver Program, Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, Preclearance) to government employees, global travelers and travel industry professionals. The aim is to efficiently convey the importance and collective benefits of these programs as they positively impact national security and the travel and tourism industry.

While each of these pro-security programs are uniquely beneficial, we believe a recognition of their collective benefits will enhance the understanding of all stakeholders, thereby improving our ability to market the welcome. This would entail a high degree of collaboration between the public and private sectors, perhaps involving private sector partners like Brand USA, US Travel and Destinations International.

### **DELIVER A CONSISTENT, PRO-TRAVEL MESSAGE**

Whereas the administration has made its commitment to national security very clear, it is important for the administration to convey that the U.S. aspires to remain a safe, welcoming destination to all visitors who pose no threat to our nation's security. Your remarks delivered to IPW attendees in June encompassed this message and were very well-received, but this must be an ongoing effort.

We recommend you encourage development of specific message points informed by market research, conducted by Brand USA, that addresses perceptions of the United States, awareness of U.S. travel policies and optimal use of various messaging tactics. These message points can be disseminated to ambassadors, embassy staff and key government officials such as cabinet members, deputies, undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, etc. This message could also be powerfully conveyed by President Trump when traveling abroad in allied nations, inviting them to visit the United States or perhaps when announcing a new national travel and tourism goal.

### **UTILIZE BRAND USA**

We believe Brand USA should play a key role in the development and implementation of these recommendations. The Travel Promotion Act specifically delineates to Brand USA the responsibility of communicating visa and entry policies on behalf of the administration. Furthermore, Brand USA's talented staff of marketers and researchers can ensure the

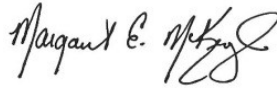
recommendations related to branding, communication and promotion are effectively implemented. And, Brand USA can leverage its relationship with nearly 700 partners, including brands, destinations, state tourism agencies and media companies to ensure the administration's policies are effectively communicated worldwide.

Mr. Secretary, we thank you for your leadership and wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of your agency to grow the travel and tourism economy. The TTAB stands ready to work with the Departments of Commerce, State and Homeland Security to further the Secure Travel Partnership and look forward to discussing this further at a future TTAB meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



John Sprouls  
Chair



Margaret McKeough  
Vice Chair



Greg Stubblefield  
Vice Chair