



Bill Hornbuckle
Chair

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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WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 9, 2024

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The Board met at Herbert C. Hoover Building, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, at 10:00 a.m., Bill Hornbuckle, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT

BILL HORNBUCKLE, MGM Resorts; Chair
BRAD DEAN, Discover Puerto Rico; Vice Chair
JULIE COKER, San Diego Tourism Authority
LIZ FITZSIMMONS, Maryland Department of
Commerce, Office of Tourism and Film
MUFI HANNEMANN, Hawaii Lodging and Tourism
RUSS HEDGE, Hostelling International USA
ANDREW LEARY, Coraggio Group
ERIC LIPP, Open Doors Organization
TRICIA PRIMROSE, Marriott International
PETER VAN BERKEL, Travelco USA, Inc.

ALSO PRESENT

GINA RAIMONDO, Secretary of Commerce

JENNIFER AGUINAGA, Designated Federal Official

PRISCILLA CHENG, LA28*

FRED DIXON, Brand USA

ERIK HANSEN, U.S. Travel Association

GRANT HARRIS, Assistant Secretary for Industry
and Analysis, International Trade
Administration

ALEX LASRY, Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Travel and Tourism, International Trade
Administration

CARSON SPENCE, Team Lead - Policy Coordination,
Strategy, Policy Coordination, and
Innovation, Transportation Security
Administration*

JULIE STUFFFT, Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Visa Services, Department of State

* present via videoconference

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

2 10:12 A.M.

3 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you all for
4 coming to this place on this date. I want to
5 thank everybody online who's joined us this
6 morning.

7 Again, for those who don't know, I'm
8 Bill Hornbuckle and our -- I am your TTAB chair.
9 I want to thank again the Secretary for coming.

10 Julie, I see you're here. Thank you
11 for joining us, as well as Grant and Alex we hope
12 to hear from more later.

13 Your know, we're at a critical and
14 pivotal point in the industry. I think we have
15 all seen us, and we'll talk more about this,
16 recover fairly nicely from the pandemic. So I
17 think we all sit in a much better place.

18 There is still -- and you'll hear
19 about a lot of this today, most of you
20 participate in all these discussions -- a great
21 deal of work to continue to do and to focus on.

22 Obviously, we all are focused on the

1 election coming up and what it all means to this
2 organization and travel in general.

3 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I was hoping you
4 could tell me.

5 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: I cannot and nor
6 will I dare, at least at this point. But if I
7 may, Madam Secretary, turn this session over to
8 you for a few comments.

9 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
10 Well, first of all, I'm very pleased to be here
11 and I appreciate all of you being here in person
12 and on the phone.

13 Greetings to all the folks who are
14 Zooming in. Huge thank you to you, Bill, as our
15 chair. You've been so dedicated to this work,
16 which I have personally really appreciated.

17 I know you wanted to do this in Las
18 Vegas. This time of year is just hard, and I
19 have to leave later to go to Rome for a G-7
20 meeting. Otherwise I would have tried to do
21 that.

22 But in any event, you've been awesome

1 and I've appreciated that and all of you.

2 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank the three in
3 the back there.

4 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah. No, truly,
5 I'm being very serious. You guys for supporting
6 him and all of you guys for doing all the work
7 that you do. I was -- in preparation for this I
8 was reflecting on what it was like when I first
9 got this job in 2021 and what it was like when we
10 had our first meeting.

11 I remember it so vividly and it, like,
12 pretty dark days if you can think back and I
13 remember meeting with you guys which was
14 primarily virtual and I could feel the anxiety
15 that you had, and as you just said there's almost
16 been a full recovery. Not quite, which I'm still
17 kind of bummed about.

18 I wish at this point it would be a
19 full recovery and what I would like to hear today
20 when we have our discussion is what do you think.
21 I mean, the statistics are that we're close to a
22 full recovery so 84 percent of pre-pandemic

1 visitation.

2 So in 2020 -- last year, 2023,
3 international visitation to the U.S. was 66
4 million, which is at 84 percent of pre-pandemic
5 visitation. The National Travel and Tourism
6 Office here says we're going to be at full
7 recovery by this time next year.

8 So that's great but -- and we're on
9 track to meet our strategy of 90 million visitors
10 in 2026 which, of course, as we have discussed
11 before is one year earlier than our strategy
12 aimed for.

13 So I think we set a great goal -- 90
14 million visitors spending about \$280 billion by
15 2027. I think we're going to hit that by 2026
16 and that ought to be our goal.

17 You know, I wish we were in full
18 recovery now. I hope we're in full recovery a
19 year from now. But I want to -- first of all,
20 what I know is two things.

21 One, we wouldn't be where we are but
22 for your work. Two, keeping the work of this

1 group going to just keep tourism at the top of
2 the list is a very big deal.

3 I'm here in person. I come to every
4 meeting because I believe in it. It's a lot of
5 good jobs so we got to keep it going.

6 As we wind down the year, wind down
7 the term, we all have to make sure tourism stays
8 at the top of the list because they're good jobs.

9 And the second thing is I just want to
10 hear from you today. I'm giving you the
11 statistics. You know the statistics, but what's
12 going on on the ground? How does it feel to you?
13 Do you feel like you're amidst a full recovery?
14 Where are the soft spots? Where are the good
15 spots, et cetera?

16 So, anyway, just thank you. Thank
17 you, and also a big thank you to my own team.
18 Alex is amazing. Grant is amazing. These guys
19 are committed to it and we're going to work until
20 the very last moment. We want to keep getting
21 things done.

22 So thank you.

1 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Madam
2 Secretary, and thank you for your support and
3 everyone's support. I think it's safe to say we
4 are in a better place but we have a long way to
5 go.

6 And by the way, it will always never
7 get fixed. It's always going to be the -- just
8 given the scale and scope of the -- scale and
9 scope --

10 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah.

11 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: There's no arrival
12 day. There's always us continuing to push ahead.

13 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah.

14 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: But I think given
15 particularly the pandemic we're in a good place.
16 I think we'll hear from some of the folks,
17 probably Mufi of note. When you talk about
18 recovery you talk about things like Asia.

19 I think you're going to find pretty
20 quickly that China and Japan and a couple other
21 markets are the ones that are missing, if you
22 will, at least at scale and I can particularly

1 change that for the markets.

2 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Say it again.

3 China --

4 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: China, of note, is
5 missing, given all the obvious --

6 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah, we got to
7 fix that.

8 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Well, until we can
9 fly over Russia it's going to be a challenge. So
10 if you can fix that, Madam Secretary.

11 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: You think that's
12 the primary thing?

13 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Well, if there's
14 any airline carriers in here maybe they can speak
15 to that in a couple moments. But it's one of the
16 deterrents for sure in terms of travel back.

17 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So you don't
18 think it's the general tension --

19 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Of course. It's
20 all of the above. I wouldn't say no.

21 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Okay.

22 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: All of the above.

1 But, again, I want to thank you for your
2 participation and that of your staff. I would
3 like to just for anybody involved -- and I know a
4 couple of you are with properties for Florida.
5 You know, let's keep our fingers crossed.

6 I know you can moderate because here
7 we go -- here they go again. Unfortunately, we
8 don't have anything in Florida, at least. But we
9 have had -- we literally lost in '05 a property.
10 Wiped out, moved across the street. The whole
11 property moved across the street.

12 So we understand the impact of what
13 this can do and so our best thoughts and wishes
14 to all of you in --

15 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah, North
16 Carolina. I mean, it's crazy that we're on to
17 the next hurricane but they're, like --

18 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Yeah.

19 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: The last one
20 through there.

21 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: So anyways, again,
22 I want to thank you for your work and the balance

1 of this committee's work. You know, we have made
2 a couple submissions at scale.

3 One of them -- I think I'm anxious to
4 hear from Julie of note and others in the context
5 of what we have advocated for, where we are and
6 ultimately where it's going, and maybe and
7 hopefully have a dialog around what to focus on
8 and what we can focus and leave, at least as a
9 legacy of this group, for the future.

10 These are the two or three things that
11 really matter and continue that. And some of
12 it's just constant pressure but most of it just
13 what's focused about what really matters, how we
14 think about it.

15 You know, maybe not in any particular
16 order but just a couple of thoughts and then if
17 we can open this up we can go back through these
18 things.

19 All of the infrastructure work has
20 been great. Whether it's the infrastructure of
21 just getting people to a destination and the ease
22 of access to that I think we are in a much better

1 place.

2 Again, much to do but I think
3 everything from the journey of trying to get a
4 visa on through at least if you look at some of
5 the stats -- and I think we'll hear some a little
6 later -- we're in a better place. But it could
7 always be improved upon.

8 But that's been great. I think to me
9 one of the challenges and one of the takeaways --
10 if no one else makes it this I'm going to make it
11 this in this meeting -- is workforce development.

12 You know, I can speak for our company
13 which is fairly large scale. We still lack 1,500
14 people. We always are in that mind set and in
15 that boat.

16 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: In hotel?

17 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: In hotel. It's all
18 over but principally in hotel. Principally in
19 hotel. And, you know, it's trade workers. It's
20 people who -- and I can speak for the community
21 of Las Vegas of no people grew up in the industry
22 and their families, and post pandemic the

1 tradition of mom works in the casino, therefore
2 I'm going to work in the casino, is not a legacy
3 anymore. And so what we do, how we do, how we
4 focus.

5 I remembered at one point one of the
6 submissions and the recommendations there was a
7 call out and potentially a help to reach out to
8 Labor and see -- see if we can't do something
9 more productive in the context of telling the
10 story of hospitality, its workers, and how they
11 build careers.

12 And so I want to leave that as, I
13 think, an important place to launch from and,
14 again, I think post-COVID things have settled in.

15 I couldn't tell you the same story a
16 year ago. I would be looking for 5,000 people.
17 So I think we're in a better place but I think
18 now it's really more -- it's not so much COVID
19 related.

20 It's structural in the context of how
21 people view the industry, how they view careers,
22 immigration and, you know, the upflow from that

1 in terms of workforce. All of those issues come
2 into play.

3 I think in terms of infrastructure,
4 obviously, visa process reform, et cetera, will
5 continue and I look forward to hearing about
6 that.

7 We did have, I think, one massive
8 success and thanks to this group and thanks to
9 you as well we were able to get to the Department
10 of Transportation and, obviously, I think you've
11 probably all heard of Brightline.

12 The choo-choo train is coming from Las
13 Vegas to L.A. and along the way -- I will admit
14 this, one of the reasons I joined this group to
15 begin with was I wanted to impact the I-15
16 corridor.

17 It's a huge corridor for commerce, and
18 so it feels like along the way now that's also
19 going to get impacted because they are literally
20 building the train right through the middle of
21 this thing.

22 And so for all of your help there I

1 want to thank you for that on behalf of
2 particularly our community, but in general I
3 think it stands as a good symbol for tourism and,
4 you know, in terms of a good outcropping from
5 this infrastructure bill.

6 It's not free. It was a \$3 billion
7 grant into a \$10 billion project, which will
8 probably cost \$12 billion when it's all said and
9 done. Don't quote that.

10 But all that being said, we're pretty
11 excited by all of that. We, in terms of sports,
12 you know, the little engine -- not little engine,
13 but the engine that could we caught the car, as
14 they say, and we now have I think eight of the
15 top 10 sporting events in the world over the next
16 decade. We can start talking about the Olympics,
17 the World Cup. It goes on and on and on.

18 We as a country and we as a process
19 aren't overly organized in this. I think we have
20 one -- we have one individual who's focused on
21 it. I mean, literally one individual.

22 I said, well, I'll have my staff call

1 your staff and I have no staff. True story. But
2 in the context of helping our way through
3 receiving the Olympics and all of the other
4 things that go all the way through the Olympics
5 in '34 up in Salt Lake.

6 I think another advocacy I would make,
7 and we can talk -- that we should talk about here
8 is that I'm asking for a ministry of sports
9 tourism which, by the way, a lot of places have.

10 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: It's
11 actually a good thing to have.

12 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: A lot of places
13 have that but we need to do something to make
14 sure that we've caught -- we've caught these
15 events. I mean, literally we have all these
16 events coming.

17 What are we going to do with them and
18 how we going to handle them? And so I think
19 talking about that in today's session would be
20 helpful.

21 I think the other thing that's helpful
22 -- and hopefully this legacy will continue the

1 more we can do this, particularly through TTAB --
2 the notion of a whole of government where, you
3 know, historically, it's been -- what I never
4 realized from afar is the scale of your
5 enterprise and all of these things is massive,
6 but the communication across streams is
7 difficult.

8 And so to the extent this group can
9 help coordinate and get in the room at a
10 particular time of year, everyone to talk about
11 the same subject --

12 SECRETARY RAIMOND: That's a good
13 idea.

14 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: -- would be, I
15 think, very meaningful and we have advocated for
16 that in some of our recommendations.

17 But I think that whole of government
18 approach is a pretty important thing to truly
19 move the bar. You know, I know -- and Madam
20 Secretary, maybe we can talk a little later about
21 the assistant secretary position where we truly
22 stand on that. I know it's been allocated but it

1 hasn't been funded.

2 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: We need the
3 dough. It's a crazy thing. I didn't know about
4 this until I got to Washington, the difference
5 between authorized and appropriated. Yeah, we
6 fought so hard to get it in the budget. I'm
7 like, woo. They're, like, no, no, no, Secretary.

8 VICE CHAIR DEAN: Yeah, those two
9 words. So close in the dictionary.

10 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: And so -- and then,
11 obviously, there have been a lot of
12 recommendations and so I'm looking forward maybe
13 to hear from Alex and/or Grant on sustainability
14 in some of those initiatives and how a lot of the
15 recommendations ultimately reach out to some of
16 the rural communities that is always hard to
17 reach.

18 You know, we all talk about Hawaii and
19 Las Vegas and these other more natural obvious
20 places but it was interesting to me, particularly
21 from this group over the last couple of years,
22 the import and the engagement level.

1 There's a whole subset of tourism at
2 a micro -- not micro but a smaller level that
3 wants, needs help in many respects.

4 And so the extent this group can serve
5 as that and serve as a voice for that group
6 you'll have a great, I think, long-term
7 underpinning, whether it's national parks and/or
8 all the way down to folks who serve that
9 industry.

10 So I think that's a really important
11 thing that -- as we benchmarked and brought
12 forward what we do, who does what. Always a
13 little bit more complicated.

14 But there's a ton of an industry
15 that's tied to that and I think a lot of it will
16 spring off of some of these events. If I think
17 about World Cup, which is really in 10 markets or
18 12 markets -- I can't remember exactly -- I think
19 that's an important thing.

20 So I will stop for a moment and then
21 we can just go back and open up dialog freely on,
22 you know, how we feel about some of those

1 subjects, or is there any -- I think the intent
2 of this is where are we and what's -- for the
3 next session, the next group, what's the legacy
4 of the things we want to see continued and
5 focused on.

6 You know, obviously anxious to hear
7 some of the work that you've done with USA, and I
8 know we got more money but I can't remember if
9 it's continuing.

10 VICE CHAIR DEAN: One time.

11 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Pardon?

12 VICE CHAIR DEAN: One time only.

13 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Yeah, I thought it
14 was one time only. So I don't like that.

15 So what we do about that -- I mean,
16 it's not pittance but, frankly, compared to the
17 scale of the industry it's a pittance. And so
18 our ability to continue to push on that through
19 various things I think is important.

20 So with that I will shut up. I don't
21 know, Brad, if you have anything you want to add.

22 VICE CHAIR DEAN: Sure, a couple

1 things. I think just referencing the Secretary's
2 comments, where we started and where we're at
3 today, we can have a forward looking
4 conversation. So thank you to you and the team
5 at NTTD for tackling the challenges the way you
6 have. It's made a big impact.

7 I'm a bit of an outlier because the
8 destination I represent we're about 70 percent
9 above pre-pandemic. All-time record domestic,
10 all-time record international, and maybe the most
11 important number of all, more people working in
12 leisure and hospitality in Puerto Rico today than
13 ever before. And we couldn't have done it
14 without the support from Washington.

15 So, you know, one thing I will say --
16 and I've reminded my friends in North Carolina
17 and Virginia -- Puerto Rico two years after
18 Hurricane Maria was at pre -- above pre-Maria
19 levels.

20 So recovery will happen because this
21 industry is resilient but the pace of recovery
22 happens at the pace of trust and the pace of

1 trust happens with collaboration. So they will
2 come back. It's not an easy process but it will
3 happen.

4 A couple things as we think about
5 where we're at and where we're going,
6 particularly the next TTAB. I think you
7 introduced a couple topics that have not been on
8 the table at previous TTAB meetings --
9 accessibility in travel. So important,
10 especially as we think about it and John Sage
11 tells us one out of four Americans are facing
12 some sort of disability.

13 So creating an ecosystem where we
14 inherently strive to make travel accessible for
15 everyone regardless of age and ability so, so
16 important.

17 And we have had some good discussions
18 but I think we have just scratched the surface on
19 that one, and it extends far beyond the
20 Department of Commerce but I think there's a lot
21 of opportunity, you know, as we think about the
22 federal government on that one.

1 Secondly, there has been some really
2 riveting discussions on the technology there and,
3 of course, you know, overarching, broad, all-
4 encompassing topics like AI but even I think one
5 of the letters -- I even referenced things like
6 with less digital or more digital currency and
7 less, you know, cash and coins what that means to
8 some small businesses.

9 So I can see the continued infusion of
10 that technology discussion and how do we make
11 sure that we not just harness that but make sure
12 it's a level playing field so we're not
13 automatically creating winners and losers.

14 I would hope that the next TTAB would
15 use competitiveness as kind of the overarching
16 theme for all of our discussions. We know
17 quantitatively and qualitatively that the United
18 States is the most aspirational nation in terms
19 of travel and tourism but we also know that we're
20 not as competitive we should be.

21 And speaking to the chairman's point,
22 you know, Brand USA has made great use of those

1 one-time funds. We need to -- and, of course,
2 the Secretary can't do this. This has to start
3 down the street with capital but the
4 administration can certainly encourage that.

5 We need to get to the point where
6 we're investing competitively and excited to hear
7 from Fred some of the new directions he's going
8 to take Brand USA.

9 They're well positioned to accomplish
10 that but we need to be thinking, I think, maybe
11 going forward everything in the scope and scale
12 of competitiveness and how we do that.

13 And then -- and then I think one other
14 point. The Chairman, I think, raises a really
15 interesting one. We have talked about and
16 touched on and danced around the topic of
17 workforce development and my observation, Madam
18 Secretary -- and this is kind of being self-
19 reflective and self-critical of our industry --
20 we always rush to the lowest common denominator
21 which is the jobs we need now, because precisely,
22 as Bill points out, I mean, that's so essential

1 to the business model.

2 But I think as an industry we have got
3 to find a way to elevate travel and tourism as a
4 appealing career for the next generation.

5 You think about it. You know, your
6 pre-government career -- there's a lot of
7 industries if you don't have, you know, lot of
8 advanced education and resources you probably
9 won't easily rise to the top.

10 This is an industry without a lot of
11 formal education and with limited resources. You
12 can rise to the top pretty quickly in this
13 industry.

14 This ought to be an industry for the
15 next generation that they want to be in and we're
16 just not there yet, and I think as -- we just
17 have not cracked the code on that. You can't
18 solve it, but I think the federal government is
19 part of that.

20 So I hope that as we look to the
21 workforce development I think it's a parallel
22 path. I think we have to talk about the jobs

1 that are needed today just to sustain and grow.
2 But I think we as an industry have got to think
3 beyond that.

4 It really needs to be how do we
5 elevate the prominence of this industry as a
6 great place to find not just a job but a career
7 and so I think TTAB maybe can start to introduce
8 some of those discussions, not for lack of trying
9 -- and you certainly asked for our feedback a
10 couple times in workforce development. But I
11 think we need to maybe reframe that discussion,
12 going forward.

13 So those are some of my thoughts.

14 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I want to hear
15 from everyone but just a couple quick reactions,
16 if I could.

17 So on the work -- okay, first of all,
18 framing it as competitiveness is an excellent
19 idea, and Grant and I will figure out how to do
20 that so it gets -- next year stays on that path
21 if everyone likes that idea, because that's what
22 it's about.

1 You know, we want to out -- we want to
2 -- like, when you were saying we have the vast
3 majority of sporting events we're out competing.
4 We're getting more than our fair share. We want
5 that in everything. So I think that's great.

6 The workforce piece of it is something
7 that, you know, candidly I wish maybe I would
8 have more time to help with that because it'll
9 take a while.

10 It's really a big deal, and the
11 reality is this. I spend a huge amount of time
12 thinking about this. The majority of Americans
13 will not go to college and the vast majority of
14 Americans will not graduate college, right?

15 So about half of high school kids will
16 go to college but about 40 percentage of them
17 won't finish. They drop out with debt and no
18 degree and that's, obviously, not good.

19 And so we need to do -- I think as a
20 policymaker and as someone who cares about this
21 economy being competitive, the whole thing, like,
22 the solution isn't shoving everyone to four-year

1 college and racking up a ton of debt.

2 The solution is helping them find
3 alternative paths, and so I feel -- I'm doing a
4 ton with the trades, for example. Something I've
5 started here at the Commerce Department I started
6 an initiative called A Million Women in
7 Construction.

8 Basically, there's a million women in
9 construction in America right now. I say, okay,
10 let's double it. Let's get another million women
11 in construction.

12 Why am I doing that? Because the
13 trades is still a place where you can make good
14 money without a college degree and if you look at
15 the percent of women in the trades today it's
16 basically the same as it was 50 years ago.

17 So it's, like, come on, there's a lot
18 of women stuck in -- without college degrees in
19 low wage jobs. Get them in that profession. By
20 the way, we're desperate. You go try to hire an
21 electrician. The country is desperate.

22 So I would love to do the same thing

1 with you guys. I do think you put your finger on
2 it, though. We have to work together to make the
3 case it's a career almost like -- I don't want to
4 talk too much but you've hit a real chord with
5 me. I'm just going to give you an idea.

6 When I was the Governor of Rhode
7 Island our graduation rate at our community
8 college when I started was really, really bad.
9 Most students just didn't finish for all kinds of
10 reasons and one of the reasons was it was
11 complicated.

12 You show up and you're, like, my God,
13 what classes do I take? So what do I need to
14 take? What I want to get?

15 So you know what happens? The vast
16 majority of people if they don't -- if they stick
17 it out but often they don't -- is they get --
18 they spend two years, they chew through their
19 Pell Grant, and they wind up with a general
20 education degree.

21 Let me tell you something. A general
22 education degree from the average community

1 college isn't going to get you a good job. So
2 what we did is we created, like, a single piece
3 of paper -- literally, a single piece of paper.

4 It was like, okay, Bill, you want a --
5 what are you interested in? You're interested in
6 business? I would go to these events myself. Go
7 to the business line. You're interested in
8 hospitality? Go to the hospitality line, and I
9 give you a piece of paper and I say you take
10 these classes this semester, these classes next
11 semester, these classes the following semester.

12 In two years you're going to get a
13 degree, get a certificate in fill in the blank.
14 Massive increase in the graduation rate. The
15 kids -- students had a certificate for the job.

16 I kind of feel like you got to do
17 something like that on the piece of paper. Start
18 as a waitress. Do that for a year. Then you can
19 move up to this. Start at a car dealer.

20 I don't really know -- I don't know
21 your business but what I do know is no one thinks
22 that there's a simple path from \$15 an hour to a

1 career and I think if you created a simple path
2 from \$10 an hour to a career you could get -- you
3 could -- I mean, it sounds interesting to me.

4 Like, you could be, like, okay, if I
5 work my butt off for five years I'm going to have
6 an actual career with no debt. Take care of my
7 family. You need to, like, show people the path.

8 So if you want to work with me on that
9 I'm all about that. And then the whole of
10 government thing, I'm sitting here wishing I had
11 done something and I'm sorry I didn't.

12 But you know what I should have done
13 and what we should do and someone should do? You
14 should have a TTAB meeting with other Cabinet
15 level people.

16 Even if you got one meeting with the
17 Secretary of State, Secretary of Commerce,
18 Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Transportation,
19 it would make a difference. It's what -- I'll
20 end by saying this.

21 It is about visibility. You know,
22 Tony is not walking around thinking what he can

1 do to improve travel and tourism. Like, and I
2 understand he's got bigger fish to fry but
3 truthfully he should be or if he's not his deputy
4 should be because if this situation doesn't get
5 better it hurts competitiveness.

6 DOT got to be walking around thinking
7 what can I do? And I think airports, trains --
8 you just said trains, infrastructure. You know,
9 Brand USA I worked really hard to get the money
10 on that. Other people should have helped --
11 these other secretaries.

12 So, anyway, I'll stop. But I think
13 having a single meeting a year, one meeting a
14 year of the TTAB that includes other Cabinet
15 level people to raise the awareness would help a
16 lot and, candidly, it would help get more money.

17 If it's just me pounding the table for
18 Brand USA or pounding the table for the Assistant
19 Secretary here it's not as good as if you got
20 four Cabinet secretaries saying appropriate the
21 money. So those are some thoughts.

22 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you.

1 All right. The challenge we face
2 since it -- I won't say it's unique but to the
3 industry is think about what we do. It's
4 Saturday night. It's 10:00 o'clock at night.
5 It's prime time. Junior people have to work
6 prime time.

7 Culturally -- I hate to say this, is
8 there any millennials in the room? I apologize
9 in advance. But generally, culturally, wanting
10 to work from home, not wanting to enter the
11 industry, we have had many people -- the turnover
12 rate at our director and management level because
13 of the charge and the velocity and the time you
14 have to work, they're there on holiday, they're
15 there at 10:00 o'clock on a Saturday night
16 because that's when they need them, and it's not
17 just ours.

18 I mean, we probably are at the
19 pinnacle of that because that's what we do. But
20 it's -- the industry is -- it's prime time. It's
21 when you want a holiday, when you want a
22 vacation, when you want to go to dinner is when

1 the workforce also wants to do those same things.

2 And so this whole work hard five
3 years, get to a career, there's got to be a
4 campaign, a program, an undertone that makes
5 people want to get through that because they
6 don't generally.

7 It's not all of them. I mean, some
8 hang through but it's not that same mindset.
9 It's just not the same mindset of a 34-year-old,
10 30 -- 28-year-old I'm going to tough it out the
11 next five years.

12 I got to go in every Saturday night
13 but you know what? I'll be better off for it in
14 the long run. They just -- they don't see it
15 that way.

16 Quality of life -- you know, you start
17 talking about quality life as a Baby Boomer.
18 You're 55 years old and you're thinking about it.
19 I'll personalize this. Not at 28. Twenty-eight-
20 year-olds are thinking, what's my quality of
21 life? It's, like, okay. But that's what we see
22 and it's a very real conversation when the rubber

1 meets the road. It's, like -- anyway, so there's
2 --

3 MEMBER HANNEMANN: Thank you very
4 much, Madam Secretary, for being here.

5 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you.

6 MEMBER HANNEMANN: I also want to
7 acknowledge Alex and Fred and Bill for
8 participating in our Hawaii tourism conference.
9 Both Alex and Fred came out and we had a chance
10 to chat, talk in deeper depth about some of the
11 things we're facing here. And, Bill, also from
12 the 9th I had to reconsider Las Vegas --

13 (Laughter.)

14 MEMBER HANNEMANN: That being said, I
15 want to respond to a couple of ideas that you
16 brought forward. In my career I've been the
17 Director of the Department of Business, Economic
18 Development, and Tourism, and when I was a mayor
19 I chaired the Sports Tourism Entertainment
20 Committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

21 So what I think we need to do on this
22 workforce event, because we talked about it back

1 then, I think there needs to be -- and I said
2 this in the subcommittee report -- we need to
3 bring a laser like focus on this and I think what
4 would be good is if rather than wait for Labor or
5 the White House to step forward on that I really
6 think maybe Commerce can kind of call a summit on
7 this issue because it's really important that
8 they all understand that this industry -- the
9 beauty of it is that you don't need a lot of
10 education to have a great career and if you have
11 a lot of education that's even a better path
12 forward.

13 I learned through talking to our
14 friends in the Airlines of America if you can do
15 an entry level technical, mechanical job you can
16 start it at \$40 an hour, basically coming out of
17 high school or a community college. I mean,
18 these are things that people are not aware of.

19 So I really believe that we have got
20 to lead the charge because people don't
21 understand and appreciate our industry and I
22 think we just have to have a major focus on that

1 that talks about the jobs not just in the hotels
2 or airlines but what exists with attractions,
3 with the sustainable organizations, with retail.
4 All those jobs that are available out there you
5 can make a great livelihood or path.

6 The other thing that I think was
7 really great when you talked about, you know, our
8 group meeting with other agencies and the
9 directors and so forth. I want to take that one
10 step further. I can't remember what part of my
11 career, but there was a White House conference on
12 tourism, and that brought the leaders here and I
13 think that's what we should say to the White
14 House at some point in time, maybe now.

15 They need to call attention to this
16 industry that's creating jobs throughout the
17 country and it's going to continue to be a growth
18 industry.

19 So I think those two comments that you
20 made was really great, and I think that I'd just
21 like to elevate it, one, with Labor -- I'm sorry,
22 with Commerce taking the lead and calling some

1 kind of major summit, for lack of a better word,
2 on workforce development, and then let's elevate
3 the White House -- to the White House about a
4 conference on tourism that will call attention to
5 that. Have every Cabinet secretary be a part of
6 it and make it a priority. And so those are my
7 two thoughts.

8 Thirdly, I couldn't agree more with
9 Bill about sports and this is where I think it
10 helps stimulate international travel. You know,
11 we've got these major events. I was just in L.A.
12 recently and I said to the mayor, Mayor Butts in
13 Inglewood, and he's got the Super Bowl. He's got
14 the World Cup, you know, and all these major
15 events coming. I call him Mayor Lucky.

16 I said, you're great. I said, you're
17 in all those -- I'd like to make a pitch for not
18 just for Hawaii but for the Marianas and Guam and
19 all these areas here that as these sports
20 athletes travel to L.A. that they stop -- they
21 stop in Guam, a site that -- or even Hawaii.

22 Take those three or four days there

1 and do some of that catch up, whatever, some of
2 the preseason training or pre-Olympic training,
3 what have you. That would really give us an
4 opportunity, us little islands in the Pacific, to
5 benefit from what's going to happen throughout
6 the United States. So that was one area, and I
7 think it'll also help with international travel.

8 And the last two things I want to say,
9 on sustainable tourism, Hawaii is ready to step
10 up and share with you what our best practices
11 have been because we have come a long way.

12 Right now it's not just about
13 destination marketing, it's destination
14 management. Those are our two pillars, and now
15 I've added the third one, workforce development.

16 Those are the three things that we're
17 advocating from the Hawaii Tourism Authority
18 perspective. So we'd be glad to have also that
19 discourse and also the discussion on what we have
20 done with sustainable tourism, especially with
21 the emphasis on our Native Hawaiian culture.

22 That I really believe could be helpful to us and

1 also to learn what you're doing there.

2 And then the last thing I want to say,
3 something we preached when I was chair of the
4 U.S. Conference of Mayors Tourism Committee the
5 time has come now more than for ever for an
6 assistant secretary of tourism. Every country
7 that we go to -- I just came back from Japan. I
8 traveled in Asia.

9 They have that high-level position of
10 someone in their cabinet rank and I really
11 believe -- and we appreciate all your support in
12 that area. Whatever we can do to make sure that
13 that surpass as opposed to what we have now.

14 Despite the best efforts, I think we
15 still need to elevate the importance, the
16 salience of the issue, that tourism is the
17 industry and those are just my thoughts I would
18 like to share this morning.

19 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Excellent. Thank
20 you.

21 MEMBER HANNEMANN: And we wish we
22 could come out of the Maui recovery as quickly as

1 Puerto Rico. You got to give me your play book.

2 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: I think we have
3 time for one more comment.

4 MEMBER PRIMROSE: Go ahead. Oh. Could
5 we arm wrestle it? No? Okay. It's a yes and
6 then, Mufi, what great comments and I feel like,
7 Madam Secretary, you've given us a blueprint for
8 the next TTAB in a really wonderful way.

9 I wanted to just start by saying
10 thanks for calling them good jobs, right. I
11 mean, you kept saying that repeatedly when you
12 made your opening comments and that's how we view
13 them.

14 I think one of the things we've
15 noticed and, Bill, you probably have seen this
16 too -- we dealt with as so many did, you know,
17 the pandemic and then the pivot. I think for the
18 longest time employees felt that this was a bit
19 of a safe harbor, right?

20 Tourism and travel. I could be in
21 that space and not worry about the security of my
22 job, and then the pandemic hit and, my goodness,

1 people were furloughed left and right, right?

2 And so as we came out of it, a lot of
3 people weren't necessarily jumping back in, which
4 may -- you may have felt this too, Bill, but we
5 certainly did and, you know, I'm happy to say and
6 I think you noted it well that we are back.

7 We're getting closer. We hired 80,000
8 people at Marriott over the last year and a half
9 which is -- right, for our managed properties in
10 the U.S., which is amazing, right?

11 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Eighty thousand
12 in the U.S.?

13 MEMBER PRIMROSE: Yeah, for our
14 managed properties, right. So, amazing. And, of
15 course, our franchise properties are hiring as
16 well.

17 But I think for us we just look at it
18 as its choice and flexibility, some of the things
19 you have to give associates. I was thinking very
20 much about what you were talking about, Bill,
21 what brings people back and keeps them engaged.

22 How do we grow them into careers? We

1 don't want our associates coming in and thinking
2 this is a job, I'm going to do it and then I'm on
3 to the next thing. I want to get in and build.

4 One of the statistics we're really
5 proud of at Marriott is that 50 percent of our
6 general managers started in the hourly wage --
7 you know, in the hourly ranks. Isn't that
8 incredible just to think, okay, I can run my
9 business. I can run a hotel.

10 But that takes training. It's
11 surround sound. Like, you have to bring somebody
12 in and really embrace them. So that's part of
13 what we're looking at. I mean, we just want to
14 say thank you for the work the TTAB has done,
15 what you have done, Madam Secretary.

16 I think, Mufi, you led the work last
17 summer and we put together some really good
18 recommendations. But long-term, short-term
19 partnerships I think what we talked about and
20 making -- look at who can come into this industry
21 -- more inclusive.

22 Think about veterans, people with

1 disabilities. I mean, there's just -- there's a
2 welcome place here in hospitality. How can we do
3 that as we think about, you know, bringing more
4 people to the industry, showing them they have
5 careers, not just jobs.

6 And then, you know, we still struggle
7 a bit with seasonal workers so we're always
8 looking for an increase on H-B2 [sic] visas.
9 Yeah, 66,000. Great. We'd love to see more.

10 That's a struggle in the short term
11 for us but we're appreciative of all the support
12 we've gotten. I'll stop. I know we're tight on
13 time but thank you.

14 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: We have got time
15 for a couple more.

16 (Simultaneous speaking.)

17 MEMBER PRIMROSE: Oh, do we? Oh,
18 good. Good. Yeah.

19 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I was doing
20 really good work on the visa situation.

21 PARTICIPANT: Getting there.

22 (Laughter.)

1 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: We're hoping to
2 have some good news in a couple weeks.

3 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
4 Good news soon. We've been working really hard.
5 It's really great. And if I could just say, too,
6 on H-2Bs in particular, this year we issued more
7 than ever before in history, more than 130,000.
8 So H-2Bs are going to continue to --

9 MEMBER PRIMROSE: I don't know if they
10 captured the applause on -- we're doing applause,
11 right? Thank you.

12 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Russ?

13 MEMBER HEDGE: So, Madam Secretary,
14 one of the things that I appreciated about your
15 comments and your approach throughout your tenure
16 is the sort of can-do competitive spirit that you
17 bring to travel and tourism in the Department of
18 Commerce, and the refusal to be out-competed and
19 the desire for a fair share.

20 And I think there is one area that has
21 been prioritized by other countries -- and I'd
22 give Australia and the United Kingdom as an

1 example -- and that is their focus on youth and
2 student travel.

3 Their focus on youth and student
4 travel is an area that we have, to my knowledge,
5 never prioritized. But if we look at the 18- to
6 34-year-old age cohort and if we focus on
7 visitors to the United States for recreation,
8 pleasure, education, and cultural exchange we see
9 a cohort that I think can yield some significant
10 benefits given the strategy underlying the
11 national travel and tourism strategy.

12 There's recent research that shows
13 that the average trip spend of youth and student
14 travelers is higher than the average trip spend
15 of international travelers to the United States
16 overall.

17 It's close to \$3,000 for youth and
18 student travelers versus \$2,600 the average trip
19 spend for all international travelers and the
20 reason is that on average youth and student
21 travelers spend 30 more days in the United
22 States, which is all about --

1 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Oh. So it's not
2 per day.

3 MEMBER HEDGE: Exactly.

4 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Okay.

5 MEMBER HEDGE: Which is all about
6 their stage of life, their personal and
7 professional commitments, and also the good work
8 of the State Department in issuing specialized
9 visas for work, travel, and cultural exchange.

10 So this is an area that has threaded
11 through, I think, virtually every recommendation
12 of TTAB and I think there would be an opportunity
13 for TTAB if we would tackle advancing youth and
14 student travel as an overall theme for a
15 particular project, a particular meeting, that
16 could yield some real benefits both for the
17 strategy as well as for the broader travel and
18 tourism community.

19 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you.
20 That's an excellent idea.

21 MEMBER HEDGE: Thank you.

22 MEMBER LIPP: I'm Eric Lipp, Open

1 Doors Organization. Thank you, Madam Secretary,
2 and all of you for what you do. I just -- we
3 just released last week we were talking about
4 accessibility.

5 I know the word's been sent out here
6 a couple times. I have great news. We just
7 released our Harris poll. We actually haven't
8 released it fully but people with disabilities or
9 travel we had polled before COVID and then just
10 after, and we are back to our levels pre-COVID.

11 We' were really right up there plus or
12 minus. People are getting out. We think that
13 driving has become a really great source of --
14 hopping in the car and going to Vegas. We also -
15 -

16 (Laughter.)

17 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Unless there's a
18 battery delay.

19 (Laughter.)

20 VICE CHAIR DEAN: Struggling to get
21 that drive market in Puerto Rico.

22 (Laughter.)

1 MEMBER LIPP: But I think in
2 competitiveness in the U.S. because we work at
3 Open Doors outside the U.S. pretty heavily and,
4 you know, there's regulations now coming down in
5 other countries similar to our ADA, and we
6 already have our ADA so you guys are already
7 doing what you're supposed to be doing.

8 We have a competitive advantage now to
9 keep people here in the United States by getting
10 them to go from, you know, New York to Illinois
11 to Colorado to take advantage of what we have in
12 our own country for people with disabilities
13 because for us it is easier to travel
14 domestically.

15 There's been new service animal rules
16 put out through Europe and the CDC that have made
17 traveling with a service animal between the
18 United States and the U.K. almost impossible
19 because there's new regulations from the CDC to
20 bring a dog back into the country, and in Europe
21 you can't self-train a service animal.

22 So if you fly from the United States

1 to London on BA and then BA continued on to Rome,
2 coming back into London if you've self-trained
3 your dog you won't be allowed in the country and
4 you won't get back to the United States unless
5 you fly outside of the U.K.

6 So we have had some new regulations
7 and stuff in accessible aviation that have caused
8 some trouble. But I think that we can be
9 competitive because we have what it takes in this
10 country because we already have the movement.
11 People are talking about it at this table, which
12 means that it's really here at this table.

13 I think we're ready to go to the next
14 level. And there's a lot of money. I've got
15 billions of dollars in numbers. I printed you a
16 copy, Alex, to share with you.

17 So I have a printed copy, and if
18 anybody else wants to see our numbers I'm happy
19 to share those. It's our fifth study since 2002
20 so we have good trends as well. Thank you.

21 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: All right. Thank
22 you.

1 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thanks for your
2 comments. Very much appreciate it.

3 MEMBER HEDGE: Quick tea time. End of
4 term photo.

5 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: How do we do
6 this?

7 MEMBER HEDGE: We're going to go right
8 over there.

9 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I think we're
10 going to get a logo up on the screen.

11 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: I think we're going
12 to take a 10-minute break.

13 MEMBER HEDGE: We'll take -- yeah,
14 take the photo, take a break and then --

15 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: So all you on the
16 phone we'll be back in about 15.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
18 went off the record at 10:55 a.m. and resumed at
19 11:13 a.m.)

20 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: All right. I
21 think, before we start the second agenda, there
22 was an ask from the Secretary for us to talk

1 about related to the funding for the role.

2 She is fully supportive of that
3 because it's important. The Senator who controls
4 part of this is a woman named Jacky Rosen, who's
5 from Nevada, who, frankly, we've talked to
6 extensively about the idea of getting funding for
7 his role.

8 There's a moment of opportunity
9 between post-election, no matter what happens,
10 and a opportunity to get this thing funded and so
11 I may reach out to a couple of you, hopefully the
12 White House. I'll get to Senator Rosen.

13 Obviously, the Secretary is fully
14 supportive and will lean in. But particularly
15 with the White House and, Tricia, maybe Tony
16 could help me here.

17 MEMBER PRIMROSE: Yeah. I second it.

18 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: That would be
19 helpful. It's not -- as we all know, it's \$3.5
20 million a year. It's not about the money, it's
21 about the -- just getting an allocation and
22 getting it done.

1 And so to the extent anybody else can
2 work in that circle, Mufi, let's talk about that.
3 That would be very helpful because that's what --
4 this is simply what it's down to. So Alex,
5 obviously, can communicate and assist me on it
6 but --

7 MEMBER COKER: Bill, if you think
8 Governor Newsom would be helpful in that we can
9 certainly --

10 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: I do, actually.

11 MEMBER COKER: Okay. I can reach out.

12 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Obviously the --
13 New York Senator Schumer. Anyone with Chuck
14 Schumer as well would be very helpful. It's
15 really -- you know, the White House could just do
16 it, allocate it and or we just get it pushed
17 through.

18 All right. With that said, I think we
19 were going to have some updates, and I'm going to
20 turn this over to Grant Harris.

21 ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARRIS: Great.
22 Thanks so much. It's a pleasure to be here.

1 Thanks to everyone for making the trip
2 and for joining and for those of you who joined
3 online as well. We wanted to give a quick update
4 on the ongoing work to implement the strategy and
5 to make continued progress.

6 As everyone here understands the
7 economic importance of the industry we've been
8 telling that story far and wide, including that
9 it supports nearly 10 million American jobs
10 through \$2.3 trillion of economic activity.

11 That's a line that we want everyone in
12 the U.S. government and all of our stakeholders
13 to understand in terms of the stakes, the impact
14 on communities, and all the positive impact that
15 this industry brings.

16 It's hard to believe that we're
17 nearing the end of this term. Fortunately, I
18 have a lot of letters of recommendations to keep
19 me company.

20 Those have been read by Secretary
21 Raimondo but also been shared with the White
22 House, been shared with the Department of State,

1 with other key departments and agencies, and
2 we've been working on implementing those.

3 I wanted to touch on some of the
4 highlights as they correspond to our national
5 travel and tourism strategy, and as the Secretary
6 already recounted, it's an ambitious goal of 90
7 million visitors and reaching a very high level
8 of spend of \$279 billion annually by 2027.

9 And the numbers that we have from our
10 National Travel and Tourism Office are that we
11 are on track to meet that a year ahead of
12 schedule, which would be exciting and an
13 incredible accomplishment where we owe great
14 thanks to all of the work of this group.

15 This group was involved not only in
16 the creation of the strategy and in the modeling
17 related to what numbers would be appropriate
18 goals, but also all of your recommendations on
19 how to make continued progress are really the
20 heart and soul of a lot of this work.

21 So as many of you remember because
22 this is the strategy that you keep on your

1 bedside and refer to very regularly, it has four
2 pillars: promoting the United States as a travel
3 destination, facilitating travel to and within
4 the United States, ensuring diverse, inclusive
5 and accessible travel experiences, fostering
6 resilient and sustainable travel and tourism.

7 And I wanted to just quickly touch on
8 each again with illustrative examples. We'd be
9 here all day if we gave you the laundry list of
10 federal activity here, but there are a few,
11 particularly because they relate to some of the
12 more recent recommendations, and some of the
13 comments that were made while the Secretary was
14 here as well.

15 So in terms of the United States as a
16 travel destination we've been working on a range
17 of initiatives including with Brand USA.

18 I know we've got Fred Dixon with us
19 here today. We're thrilled about his appointment
20 as president and CEO. I know that we'll be
21 hearing from him more about the strength of that
22 partnership.

1 But we've also been working including
2 with Deputy Assistant Secretary Stuftt and with
3 others at the State Department making sure that
4 Commerce and our U.S. embassies are working in
5 these top markets to make sure that we have
6 country-specific plans and that we are holding
7 ourselves to account to see what kind of progress
8 we're making in promoting the U.S. as a strategic
9 -- as a destination in these strategic tourism
10 country plans.

11 That's also making sure that we're
12 taking a comprehensive approach to attracting as
13 many visitors as possible. Some specific markets
14 were mentioned. Bill, you mentioned Japan. You
15 mentioned China.

16 Japan, for instance, we've declared
17 2024 as the U.S.-Japan tourism year and made that
18 a driver and a focal point of a lot of work.

19 Japan was the second largest source of
20 overseas travelers to the U.S. before the
21 pandemic. It's also, we understand, an
22 especially important market for Hawaii but for

1 many other destinations, too.

2 We're only at about 40.5 percent of
3 the 2019 levels. There's a lot of headroom and a
4 lot of ongoing work that needs to be done. Alex
5 and the National Travel and Tourism Office have
6 been focusing on this.

7 They've also been focusing on India
8 too, which is another market with great
9 potential. We have made this as part of our
10 U.S.-India relationship.

11 We've established different things
12 like working groups related to travel, business
13 matchmaking events, data exchanges, outreach
14 programs, just illustrative examples of some of
15 the types of ways that we're trying to double
16 down.

17 And then for China many of you all
18 have already traveled out for the summit, which I
19 had the honor of leading the delegation to. We
20 had the largest, most diverse delegation that had
21 ever attended the U.S.-China Summit and that's
22 the U.S.-China Tourism Leadership Summit which we

1 had back in May and we're continuing to follow up
2 on that. We owe Brand USA great thanks for their
3 part in playing -- in putting on such a great
4 event.

5 And then we know too that those
6 numbers are also incredibly important for the
7 bottom line. If we got to 2019 Chinese
8 visitation numbers, that would support 50,000
9 American jobs directly.

10 That's, again, an important part of
11 the story that we want to have everyone
12 understand.

13 To sports, we've been really focused
14 on this and we've been focusing on the impact of
15 these large-scale events -- obviously, the World
16 Cup, the Olympics.

17 One of the recommendations that had
18 been made, also formally from this group, too,
19 was that we could take a more whole of government
20 approach.

21 The Secretary thought that was a very
22 fair and very reasonable recommendation so she

1 turned to us and figured out -- and said, figure
2 out how we can do a better job here.

3 One of the things that we did is in
4 hosting the Tourism Policy Council -- I hosted
5 that meeting some weeks back and we decided
6 particularly with the State Department that we
7 would create a whole of government committee as
8 had been recommended by this body to be organized
9 on sports, not only on issues like visas but a
10 holistic approach where we can think about
11 maximizing the positive impact of this
12 visitation.

13 And that subcommittee has already met
14 at least once. They'll be working on the
15 recommendations that came up but also trying to
16 identify more concrete steps for how we can
17 leverage these international sporting events over
18 the next decade.

19 So we understand exactly how important
20 this is. We've also been looking at our own data
21 through the survey of international air travelers
22 and looking at what international travelers tend

1 to do while attending sporting events and how we
2 can be strategic in increasing the number of days
3 for visitation, et cetera.

4 So, more to come and we welcome
5 continued specific feedback on all of that but
6 very much understand how important that holistic
7 approach is, and very thankful for the
8 recommendation and the specific ideas that we
9 could be following.

10 In terms of facilitating travel, we're
11 going to be hearing from the State Department,
12 Homeland Security, and others. There's a lot of
13 great work going on in that space so I won't
14 preview it here.

15 In terms of ensuring diverse,
16 inclusive and accessible tourism experiences
17 under the strategy that's also been a focus. It
18 will continue to be.

19 We've been -- from the Commerce
20 Department, we've been and will be continuing to
21 organize -- excuse me, we plan to be organizing
22 webinars and meetings to educate diverse, small

1 and medium-sized businesses in the travel and
2 tourism sector on the federal government programs
3 and grants that exist.

4 We realized in some of our
5 conversations, including with members of TTAB,
6 that there wasn't always the connectivity or the
7 information being provided by the federal
8 government and the making some linkages there
9 might be more helpful, and that we want to make
10 sure that we're surfacing opportunities for the
11 private sector to be accessing these federal
12 government programs and having a greater amount
13 of work on our side, too.

14 We signed a new strategic partnership
15 with a diversity and inclusion organization to
16 extend the benefits of travel and tourism to
17 underserved communities across the United States.

18 We'll be following up on that. That
19 also covers things like webinars and outreach and
20 training for businesses, and we've been working
21 with our federal partners too.

22 For instance, the Department of

1 Transportation proposed a new rule that is
2 requiring airlines to meet new standards for
3 prompt, safe and dignified assistance for
4 passengers with disabilities. Again,
5 illustrative -- there's a lot more that we want
6 to do in this space and it's a priority that we
7 need to continue pursuing.

8 On sustainable travel and tourism,
9 we've got a lot of exciting activity there, too.
10 There are many agencies that are working with
11 tribal, state, local, and private sector
12 stakeholders to strengthen resilience to climate
13 change and extreme weather events.

14 Our National Oceanic and Atmospheric
15 Administration, NOAA, which is down the hall and
16 part of Commerce announced that it will invest
17 \$50 million in funding from the Inflation
18 Reduction Act to help strengthen climate
19 resilience and enhance equitable access to
20 benefits of its national marine sanctuary system.

21 And then the Department of Interior
22 announced \$195 million in investment in climate

1 restoration and resilience projects to protect
2 America's national parks.

3 Again, a small portion of the work.
4 Also, we recognize in attending these and being
5 part of TTAB that it's a big time commitment and
6 we're really thankful for that.

7 We know it trades off against other
8 activities whether it's work or personal time,
9 whatever limited personal time you're getting
10 these days, to be able to be here.

11 It's helpful not just with the formal
12 recommendations but it also very helpfully in the
13 conversation with the Secretary in the notes that
14 she passed to me and Alex just while you all were
15 talking, I think we have at least 10 new things
16 we're following up on which we're excited about.

17 Her vigor and her mandate gives us a
18 lot of ability to be making -- do additional on
19 these issues.

20 The competitiveness as a theme really
21 hits home, particularly since the National Travel
22 and Tourism Office and the industry analysis

1 business unit in which it sits, our whole mission
2 is the -- to strengthen the global
3 competitiveness of U.S. industry.

4 So that is literally our job and that
5 frame is very natural. That was one thing among
6 many that really sparked the interest of the
7 Secretary and she asked us to follow up on that.

8 On students and youth, I just wanted
9 to mention we'd be happy to engage more there,
10 too. We elevated this as a priority for our
11 export promotion strategy and we have been making
12 investments there.

13 But I think there's a lot of headroom
14 to do more and we would really welcome some
15 specific ideas to dig in.

16 I wanted also just to mention Erik too
17 noted the comments about the regulatory issues as
18 we're doing more convenings on disability issues.

19 I wasn't -- I'm not sure if we had
20 already factored that in issues specifically in
21 terms of service dogs and some of the
22 difficulties that these regulatory issues can

1 cause.

2 So we will make sure that we take that
3 on too and we welcome additional information
4 there as well.

5 And then I think also, Bill, I just
6 wanted to go back to your comment about the
7 hurricanes. We're really mindful of the loss and
8 also the difficulty that many communities,
9 individuals and companies have been feeling.

10 We don't talk about supply chains and
11 infrastructure as much in this body, but that's
12 another place where Secretary Raimondo has made
13 deep investments in creating a supply chain
14 center.

15 We've been upping our game on
16 quantitative and qualitative analysis on
17 disruptions, which include weather related
18 events, and if you, your companies or others in
19 this space are facing issues on supply chains or
20 other things related to trying to minimize the
21 disruptions caused by these hurricanes or other
22 issues, please flag that for our team too to see

1 if there's any additional help that we or our
2 government colleagues could be providing.

3 So it doesn't touch on all the great
4 issues that had been raised. We've got a lot
5 more ongoing work. We just want to thank you for
6 the partnership, for your service.

7 We already have a great mandate for --
8 onward for TTAB and we'll be following up there
9 as well. So thanks again for your time and
10 service.

11 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you very
12 much.

13 VICE CHAIR DEAN: Mr. Chairman, can I
14 interject just a real quick comment?

15 I want to pick up on your comment
16 about the China-U.S. Tourism Leadership Summit.

17 ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARRIS: Yeah.

18 VICE CHAIR DEAN: I had the privilege
19 of attending that. I thought of all of them,
20 this was the best executed.

21 But I wanted to note in particular
22 you, Assistant Deputy Secretary Lasry, and the

1 whole team did a great job at facilitating that
2 and Assistant Secretary Harris I thought made
3 such perfect remark.

4 That was a -- I'm going to be
5 diplomatic -- a very interesting tone set by the
6 Chinese leadership. You represented our industry
7 and our nation so well and it just made me proud
8 the way you handled I thought was a pretty
9 interesting situation.

10 A couple days after that I was in
11 Beijing meeting with some business people there,
12 and they were energized about travel and tourism
13 with our country. And I'm looking at the numbers
14 -- what are you energized by?

15 They pulled out the news of -- and
16 they have you, a voiceover in Chinese -- you
17 speak Mandarin really well -- and they were
18 playing off your comments.

19 And sometimes you don't appreciate the
20 impact you have about that summit. All the way
21 over into Beijing was already reaching individual
22 business people and you represent us well and I

1 think you definitely hit the mark with that. So
2 thank you for your leadership.

3 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LASRY:
4 Thank you very much. I really appreciate that.

5 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: You can tell me
6 later about the tone, I guess.

7 Thank you. Alex, do you want to take
8 --

9 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LASRY:
10 Yeah. So in an effort to try to get us a little
11 bit back on time so that we're not running too
12 far over, I'm not going to go through kind of the
13 litany of things where we are on all the
14 recommendations.

15 I'll make sure to send the entire TTAB
16 an email on an update on where we are with the
17 recommendations.

18 But what I do just want to say is, you
19 know, because of what you guys have done and the
20 extensive amount of work that you've tasked us
21 with, we were actually able to make a lot of
22 progress and because of what this Advisory Board

1 has been able to do, you've made this government
2 more effective.

3 You've made this government more
4 efficient but, most importantly, you've made this
5 industry more resilient and stronger, and I hope
6 that everyone here is really proud of the work
7 that you guys have been able to do.

8 Your expertise and knowledge has been
9 invaluable to us and I don't want anyone to take
10 lightly. I know sometimes these advisory boards
11 can feel a little bit more for show than
12 anything, but the Secretary has taken this as one
13 of her most important advisory boards.

14 The stuff that you guys have tasked us
15 with has really made a dent in making sure that
16 we were able to recover and be probably the
17 strongest and fastest recovery of any country in
18 the world, and so you guys should all be very
19 proud of what you've done.

20 I know I'm -- I've been honored to
21 work with all of you on this and looking forward
22 to kind of taking these recommendations,

1 continuing them as we're continuing to build on
2 all the work that you gave us.

3 As a result of what you guys have
4 done, we are actually starting to convene the
5 Tourism Policy Council quarterly to make sure
6 that we are taking that whole of government
7 approach and thinking about travel and tourism
8 more often and making sure that every agency is
9 thinking about what they can do to increase
10 travel and tourism.

11 And so, again, I just want to say
12 thank you guys for everything you've done and
13 we'll make sure to send you guys an email on the
14 extensive amount of work.

15 But I want to thank, you know, Jen,
16 Brian, Christina, Julianna, Kurt, Dave, and the
17 entire team for being able to kind of really push
18 all of this forward and make sure that Grant and
19 I can look better with all the work that was
20 done.

21 So thank you, guys. I thank this
22 Board and I'll make sure to send everyone an

1 update on the extensive amount of work that we've
2 made on all the great recommendations that you
3 guys gave us.

4 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Alex.
5 We appreciate your guys' effort in return.

6 So, Julie, do you want to kick this
7 off? We want to hear, obviously, from the
8 various agencies on some of the progress that's
9 been made, hopefully?

10 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
11 Absolutely. No, thank you. Yes, the fact that I
12 showed up today means there's no progress.
13 There'd be an empty chair here --

14 (Laughter.)

15 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
16 Thank you very much. It's great to see
17 everybody, really. I mean, it's just so many
18 friendly faces and old friends at this point
19 here.

20 So let me just tell you a little bit
21 where the State Department for visa operations is
22 today. First, for those who are new, which is

1 not many of you, to how we do visa operations I
2 run the Visa Office. It's called the Visa Office
3 in the State Department. It's -- we have about
4 1,500 employees, which I know in your industry is
5 like a small bed and breakfast, but for the State
6 Department that's our largest office that we have
7 at State.

8 And I want to introduce some friends
9 who are here, some colleagues with me today.
10 Jessica Norris is our new managing director in
11 the Visa Office, so she's the number two. And
12 Kate Drenning -- I hate to say it, Kate, but you
13 --

14 MS. DRENNING: I know.

15 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
16 She's the new Morgan O'Brien.

17 (Laughter.)

18 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
19 Jessica and Kate and I are all Foreign Service
20 officers and so at some point we are compelled to
21 transfer out. Kate is -- and Morgan is now at
22 U.S. NATO in Brussels missing meetings like this

1 every day, remembering how they're going, and
2 misses all of you.

3 And Kate is just a fantastic,
4 amazingly talented Foreign Service officer who's
5 taking on what he's done and is committed to
6 build on it. So she's your point of contact if
7 we have any specific cases. And we'll keep
8 moving forward on that relationship.

9 Jessica -- also tons of experience in
10 the field. You will -- we all benefit by having
11 Jessica in this space as well.

12 I'll give you some stats. This is new
13 hot off the presses fiscal year stuff, but let me
14 tell you that you'll also be getting this in
15 writing.

16 We'll make sure in the next couple of
17 weeks as our data settles at State we make sure
18 you've got all the latest information. I'll talk
19 a little bit about resources, visa numbers and
20 wait times, and then just acknowledge the points
21 on sports and what we're doing on that -- on
22 these events.

1 You'll remember when we started these
2 conversations that we had very little staffing in
3 the field. We pulled back almost like a vacuum
4 all of our Foreign Service personnel during
5 COVID.

6 So today as of now we are not only at
7 full staffing for the State Department for visa
8 positions overseas but we are what we call over
9 complement, which means we have got more people
10 than we have jobs overseas.

11 What that means is that in very high
12 demand visa places we have two officers
13 adjudicating visas for every one position there.
14 This is true in places like Mexico and India.

15 Well, India, the government needs to
16 agree for us to do this and so we're sending them
17 to places where the government is willing to do
18 that. But this is a huge game-changer in terms
19 of what we have got, in terms of -- a lot of you
20 ask me all the time, like, what can we do, how do
21 we get more people.

22 We have lots of people now. We're

1 flooding the market with the ability to
2 adjudicate visas in the field at our 200-plus
3 embassies and consulates.

4 In addition to that, we have more than
5 80 visa adjudicators who are everywhere and what
6 they do is the -- our visa cases that don't need
7 an interview. So if you are a Mexican tourist
8 coming to the United States and you need to renew
9 your 10-year visa because we all know that you
10 don't need to come back in for that interview
11 that's often adjudicated by someone who's in
12 Tokyo or Brussels or Lima because that's where
13 those adjudicators are.

14 That means that in Mexico all of our
15 officers there are just looking at people who
16 need to come in for that first-time interview,
17 not doing these cases that don't need it.

18 That has been a complete game-changer
19 for us as an institution and let me take the
20 opportunity to say thank you for all of the work
21 that you've done to make sure that we can get
22 interview waiver authorities so that those

1 tourists don't need to come back in.

2 Once their 10-year visa has expired we
3 don't ever want to see them again. We don't need
4 to in the vast majority of cases, and that person
5 sitting in Brussels or Tokyo can do that visa
6 without Mexico being involved. It's great.

7 What this increase in capacity at
8 State means is that our goal and objective for
9 next year, for 2025, is that we will have an
10 additional 1 million interview slots available
11 for visa applicants.

12 That's in addition to the numbers I'm
13 about to tell you, which are record breaking. So
14 this is a huge amount of availability. This is
15 just going to be -- it's going to be big and it's
16 just -- I don't even know if we'll use all those
17 million slots. That's how many those are.

18 Well, we have the people to do that
19 and we're committed to doing that. So the
20 results in terms of numbers, we just ended the
21 fiscal year. You're hearing it here first.

22 Nobody else knows this except for the

1 Secretary, who is also very interested. It's
2 true. We issued more visas this year than ever
3 before. That's 11 million visas, and that last
4 record, by the way, wasn't set right before the
5 pandemic.

6 It was set in 2015 and for those who
7 were active in the space then you may know that
8 that was because of this huge surge of demand in
9 China.

10 So what's even more incredible to me
11 about the 11 million visas issued in a year
12 number is that that's with China largely being
13 offline. So our -- we're fully staffed in China.
14 There's a 30-day wait time. It's not a big deal.

15
16 In fact, we might start pulling some
17 of those officers for other accounts. But it's -
18 - all of that demand growth is other countries
19 filling in that space that China left, at least
20 from a visa demand perspective.

21 Do you -- sorry, do you have
22 questions? You're just agape at this great news?

1 VICE CHAIR DEAN: Yeah. I'm trying to
2 process that.

3 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT: So
4 when China comes back -- as China continues to
5 grow slowly, which it is -- I mean, you're seeing
6 the same trends in travel that we're seeing in
7 visa demand -- we will be ready for that but that
8 will just be on top of this other incredible
9 demand growth that we're seeing for other
10 countries in the world, which is great.

11 And, of course, as the 10-year visa
12 people, as they're renewing those 10-year visas
13 that caused the big surge in 2015, come back
14 we're ready for those and those won't be people
15 in China who are doing those.

16 What that means from a reality
17 perspective for you is that 50 million people
18 have visas today to visit the United States.
19 That's not only more than ever before, that's way
20 more than ever before. That is a huge number and
21 it's growing every day.

22 So every day we're making a new record

1 of foreigners who could today get on a plane and
2 travel to the U.S., which is great.

3 I mentioned the H-2B issue, which is
4 not about the tourists coming in but it's
5 important for you, I know, and the fact that now
6 we have -- this year we issued 130,000. That's
7 considerably a lot more than last year and that
8 number keeps increasing.

9 So as Congress allows us to issue
10 those visas for laborers coming in to support
11 mostly the hospitality issue --

12 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Julie, how does
13 that number compare to history?

14 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
15 That's 10 percent more than the last couple of
16 years but mostly that's limited by the ability to
17 -- like, we're the last step in that, right, so
18 it's the process to get labor certified, to get
19 those petitions, and whatever's needed to do
20 that.

21 So it's going up. But let's say
22 Congress were to double that number for next

1 year. We would be able to adjudicate those
2 visas. As you have those conversations just know
3 it's never going to be us that keeps those
4 numbers up.

5 So that brings me to wait times, which
6 everybody's interested in. So the bottom line is
7 that wait times are down about 60 percent in the
8 last couple of years. This is for first time
9 visitors who need that interview to come to the
10 U.S.

11 We had -- some of you remember we had
12 two big goals that we set at the beginning of
13 this year and one was to get 90 percent of our
14 countries in the world with a 90-day or less wait
15 for that first interview.

16 So basically 90 days. Great.
17 Everybody should be able to have that. How do we
18 get to the point where 90 percent of our missions
19 are in that situation?

20 The other goal was to make sure that
21 there's nobody who has to wait a year to get a
22 visa. Now, this is an interim goal because

1 obviously that's not our -- our goal is not to
2 have people wait a year to wait. Much closer to
3 the 90 days.

4 But we still had those countries, as
5 you know, a bunch of them, that had these, like,
6 sort of what we call sticker shock wait times,
7 like way -- I mean, they were -- they were 900
8 days at the beginning of the recovery and they
9 kept going down and sort of where are we. We
10 need to get rid of those.

11 So where we are is that for those long
12 wait time countries we have six. There's six
13 remaining places that we're working on. That's
14 dropping fast.

15 Interestingly, among those six, one of
16 them is Canada, which I know you don't care
17 about. Those aren't Canadians. Those are other
18 -- so there are other things at play other than,
19 you know, tourism -- people waiting to tour the
20 U.S. and visit.

21 You may remember that the last time we
22 talked and well after Brazil was on this list.

1 They have now a 30-day wait time. So sometimes
2 these drop precipitously quickly. Brazil is a
3 great example. You can get a visa interview
4 today and be here for Thanksgiving.

5 On the countries that have a 90-day or
6 less wait for that interview we're about 75
7 percent, a little over. So getting to that 90
8 is, again, the interim goal because we're going
9 to be able to do it.

10 It's getting above 90 that is our next
11 goal. Because just like you we're not -- we're
12 not measuring anymore about pre-pandemic. We're
13 not looking at 2019 numbers. We're, like --
14 we're 25 percent past that just this year. It's
15 the optimal level.

16 Like, how much can we do? How can we
17 use this crisis, as Peter and I were discussing,
18 to make this better, to optimize our visa
19 operations and just make them very, very simple,
20 easy and straightforward for anyone who wants to
21 visit the United States, which is great. That's
22 where we need to be.

1 The global median -- by the way, if
2 anybody ever asks you for the wait time for that
3 interview, is 60 days. So you've got these high
4 ends but you've got some that are literally,
5 like, you walk in the next day and get an
6 interview, and we want to bring it, like,
7 somewhere much closer to that.

8 On sports just, you know, hearing all
9 of this, knowing how big -- what a big deal these
10 events are and how big they are we are also
11 really, really aware that it's not about the
12 teams, the coaches, the journalists, players, or
13 even ticketed folks coming to these games.

14 It's anybody who's adjacent to these
15 events, right? You don't need to say you've got
16 a ticket to a World Cup match to get here. Quite
17 the contrary.

18 Like, you just have to be qualified.
19 Doesn't matter if you're coming to the fan zone,
20 if you're going to the game itself, or something
21 else.

22 So we are committed to make sure that

1 it's not a visa interview that's standing between
2 anybody coming to the World Cup, to the Olympics
3 for sure -- any of that -- and we don't think
4 that's going to be a problem.

5 Our embassies are really, really
6 involved in engaging people saying if you want to
7 go let's apply.

8 At the same time those long wait times
9 in those last few are going to come down pretty
10 quick. So we're not going to be in a situation
11 where people are sobbing on the steps of the U.S.
12 embassy in Bogota because they couldn't see their
13 team play. We're very, very, very plugged into
14 that and making sure that that doesn't happen.

15 And the same, obviously, goes for any
16 of these events. We had Copa. Copa went really
17 well. We're watching the events of the past, the
18 Cricket World Cup, others, to make sure that --
19 that worked for us and that we can do that going
20 forward because we will not be the one standing,
21 again, that's been a very clear direction from
22 the State Department, between a visitor coming

1 for a big sporting event that we bid on and them
2 getting it.

3 And I guess just to close, if I've got
4 a second, I just want to say thank you to
5 everybody here. You -- also our colleagues in
6 Commerce.

7 I mean, you know, Grant, Alex,
8 Jennifer, it's been, you know, a crazy couple of
9 years, and we asked you to stick with us and
10 trust us on this and you did, and I hope that the
11 results of what we're doing now honor you in this
12 industry and the work that you've done in the way
13 that we want to honor you because it's out of
14 respect for you and what we need to do as public
15 servants that we have gotten this far, and we'll
16 continue to keep working on that.

17 But the collegiality and collaboration
18 of everyone in this room has just meant so much
19 to the State Department and it will continue.

20 But I want to take that opportunity to
21 say thanks.

22 CHAIR HORNBuckle: And thank you.

1 Been a great honor so we appreciate it. I know
2 there's a long journey. There's always a
3 journey.

4 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STUFFT:
5 There's always a journey.

6 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you. But
7 thank you. Those are exciting numbers. Those
8 are very good numbers.

9 In the expediency of time, Carson has
10 a question. Carson, are you online?

11 MR. SPENCE: I am. Good morning,
12 everybody.

13 Sorry I couldn't be with you guys.
14 I'm Carson Spence, the director of interagency
15 policy coordination here at TSA.

16 First of all, you know, thanks to the
17 group and to the Commerce team for having me.

18 You know, for TSA, we really continue
19 to work to implement the actions that were
20 identified in the national strategy and
21 demonstrating our commitment to really enhancing
22 the pass through experience for travelers through

1 better security.

2 Kind of right off the top I think for
3 this group it's important to highlight that the
4 summer that wrapped a month or so ago was TSA's
5 busiest travel season yet.

6 We set record upon record, and just
7 kind of to put that in perspective the 10 busiest
8 days in TSA's history have all occurred this
9 year, in calendar year 2024.

10 So, you know, there's a lot of talk
11 about growth and kind of, you know, returning
12 kind of from the pandemic and things like that.
13 So definitely wanted to highlight that.

14 Kind of looking forward,
15 unsurprisingly, you know, we don't expect the
16 holiday travel period that's fast approaching to
17 be any different. Expecting it to be the busiest
18 one we have seen on record.

19 So I wanted to note that TSA is ready
20 to kind of meet that demand and kind of we're
21 continuing to innovate and think creatively about
22 ways that we can make the experience smoother for

1 passengers.

2 So kind of with that, I wanted to
3 highlight a few initiatives that are near and
4 dear to our heart at TSA and walk the group
5 through some of those, the first being PreCheck,
6 one of the key programs that we have here at TSA.

7 We're continuing to work to make that
8 easier for folks to apply and get that benefit.
9 Since last year we have seen about a 25 percent
10 increase in the number of active enrolled
11 members.

12 So we just hit the 20 million mark, so
13 a huge number there for us, and if you take that
14 20 million number you can double that and so the
15 folks that have access to the PreCheck benefit
16 through some other means, whether it's Global
17 Entry or another federal vetting program, takes
18 that number up to about 40 million folks. So we
19 think that that's a really good number.

20 You know, in the last year we've
21 continued to expand the number of airlines that
22 we offer PreCheck to and added some new

1 enrollment partners.

2 So really, really proud of that. And
3 then kind of for us, like, the security piece and
4 the ways that we're continuing to improve there
5 really started with tech.

6 We think that the past year experience
7 and world class security aren't necessarily
8 mutually exclusive. Obviously, we're the
9 Department of Homeland Security, it's in our
10 name, so we need to focus on that security first.
11 But we really feel like past year facilitation is
12 a positive output and byproduct of continuing to
13 improve our security effectiveness.

14 So a couple quick things to highlight.
15 I'm sure most of you are familiar with our
16 screening checkpoint, one being the credential
17 authentication technology. We'll call them the
18 CAT machine here.

19 As you've probably seen we continue to
20 roll these out. This is where you insert your ID
21 into the machine there instead of handing your
22 boarding pass to an officer for validation.

1 The second being our advanced imaging
2 technology for -- this is on-person screening.
3 Continue to improve our algorithms there to
4 improve detection and minimize the false
5 positives.

6 Obviously, that continues with the --
7 kind of the flow through the checkpoint and to
8 really bolster the facilitation of the past year
9 experience for folks moving through our system.

10 And then, finally, the computer
11 tomography machines. Those are -- those are
12 essentially the gigantic X-ray machines that you
13 see at the checkpoint.

14 We're continuing to push more and more
15 and more of those out to the field there. It's
16 an incredible technology. It gives our officers
17 a really robust view of the image going through
18 the machine. They can move it around and slice
19 and dice the image.

20 It really gives you a better image,
21 which leads to fewer bag inspections, fewer bag
22 pulls for resolution. So an added benefit to the

1 traveler there and as a -- as kind of another
2 positive with that I just want to highlight, that
3 due to the effectiveness of the image of the CT
4 machines, we're not having passengers move
5 through -- having to remove their 3-1-1 liquids
6 and their laptops out of the bags. So super
7 positive there and wanted to highlight that.

8 And I know our leadership here in the
9 building and especially at the department
10 wouldn't want me to get off the hook here without
11 noting the REAL ID deadline here on May 7th of
12 2025 quickly approaching.

13 I know it's been pushed year over year
14 over year but it's looking like it's going to
15 hold this year.

16 So we wanted to kind of, you know, put
17 a reminder out there for folks that it's quick
18 approaching and we're encouraging travelers to
19 make sure that they get their ID set up with --
20 the REAL ID through their DMV.

21 And then finally to close, kind of
22 moving away from tech into some of the other

1 programs that we're working on, with respect to
2 One Stop Security, this is a signature program
3 for Administrator Pekoske here at TSA and we have
4 received the pilot authority for up to six
5 locations in the NDAA a few years ago.

6 We're continuing to work towards some
7 of those agreements with our bilateral partners
8 and in consult with some of our air carriers and
9 airports.

10 You know, we're getting close.
11 Nothing necessarily to announce at this time for
12 this group but, you know, stay tuned. I think
13 that we're very close. We should have some
14 positive information to share with our industry
15 partners here in the coming months.

16 So pending any questions, that's what
17 I have from the team.

18 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Carson, thank you
19 for the update and thank everyone there for your
20 work.

21 One question. On the REAL ID, do we
22 have any sense of how many people who might be in

1 the travel bucket don't have that done? Have you
2 guys surveyed that at all?

3 MR. SPENCE: I don't. Unfortunately,
4 I don't have that in front of me.

5 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: I'm looking at one
6 --

7 All right. Maybe we have an ad
8 campaign. Thank you, Carson.

9 All right. If I could turn this over
10 -- time again, Fred, our new CEO. Fred?

11 MR. DIXON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Good morning, everyone. It is great
13 to be in this room -- Julie, you said it really
14 well -- amongst friends and colleagues and new
15 introductions. I thank you all for your support.

16 I want to acknowledge two of my
17 colleagues that are with me today -- Peter Dodge,
18 our director of public affairs, and Vicente
19 Garcia, our new VP of corporate affairs. I want
20 to thank them both for all the great work that
21 they do.

22 First of all, I just want to add my

1 gratitude that's been shared around this table
2 for the great work that you all have done this
3 year. It's very clear that you have impacted
4 policy in an amazing way.

5 You've served in turbulent waters and
6 you have steered us into clearer and more calm
7 waters and I'm excited to be joining the team at
8 Brand USA at this moment.

9 I'm 90 days in to the new job and I've
10 been on a listening tour spending time with the
11 industry, most recently in Hawaii with Mufi and
12 his team, and then just before that I was in my
13 home state of Tennessee for their governor's
14 conference. So the listening is -- has begun in
15 earnest and the feedback is coming and it's been
16 terrific.

17 I do want to say that I have served on
18 this Board in the past. I know the commitment
19 that you all have made and I thank you for your
20 strong support and all that you have done.

21 I share your commitment to the
22 industry. Those of you that don't know anything

1 about me I've spent my life in this industry. I
2 grew up in my family's small business and often
3 point out it's a motel, not a hotel.

4 I told my mom she hung on so long as
5 she's now retro and cool again so she's been the
6 GM for 56 years. It's a real inspiration to me.
7 That's where I got my toes in the sand, as it
8 were, in tourism in the Great Smoky Mountains.

9 Went on to lead the nation's largest
10 DMO in New York City, and it's a journey from
11 Gatlinburg to New York City and now proud to be
12 at Brand USA. So I'm bringing what I learned in
13 New York to this role.

14 So it is exciting times but I share
15 your commitment to the transformative power of
16 this industry to build communities, to build
17 strong livelihoods.

18 It was terrific to see that, as the
19 Secretary pointed out, good paying jobs because
20 we have seen that in action, but also foster
21 understanding across cultures and borders. That
22 is a big part of what we do in addition to

1 powering this amazing economic engine that is
2 travel and tourism.

3 I just want to assure you that my
4 colleagues and I are as committed as ever to the
5 mission of Brand USA to mark the United States
6 and the territories as the premier travel
7 destination in the world.

8 We have long said, A, my goal is to
9 make it the premier destination in the world.
10 It's the -- that fuels and enhances the dynamic
11 image of the United States around the world.

12 That's critically important through
13 brand leadership and partnerships, inspiring
14 campaigns and content, and especially
15 highlighting the diverse and accessible
16 experiences found only right here in the USA and
17 in the territories.

18 So all of that designed to generate an
19 urgency to visit now and I heard that very clear
20 from our partners in Hawaii and others. The time
21 is now and the opportunities are now and,
22 certainly, the conditions are there.

1 I plan on building on the collective
2 successes at Brand USA over the past 14 years --
3 it's amazing to think it's now been 14 years in
4 existence -- through some strategic action that's
5 going to ensure that we are positioned well to
6 adapt and thrive and lead in an ever more
7 competitive world.

8 And I love the competitive framework
9 conversation. We actually have already begun
10 some research on our competitive set to see what
11 is being spent abroad, how our competitors are
12 positioning their destinations, and where the
13 past opportunities are for us.

14 There just a few areas that I want to
15 highlight that I'm looking at to affect the work,
16 going forward, and that includes expansion of our
17 global footprint. It's terrific to hear the visa
18 wait times.

19 We're going to look to build new
20 markets, build out new capabilities abroad, to
21 shore up the existing markets, obviously, where
22 we still need to recover like Japan and Korea

1 and, certainly, China as things evolve there, but
2 also where are we planting seeds for the future
3 and I think about areas in Southeast Asia -- I
4 think about markets in Africa and beyond that we
5 can begin to till the ground. I'm excited about
6 that.

7 Expanding our in-market activities we
8 have got travel week in just two weeks coming up
9 in the U.K. Many of you are coming over with us.
10 We're excited for that program.

11 I'm happy to report record
12 registrations for that program across the board,
13 all from CEOs that are attending to travel media
14 journalists and certainly to trade and suppliers.
15 So that's terrific.

16 I'm also excited to expand our global
17 communications and PR efforts. We're building
18 out a state of the art world-class global comms
19 team to begin to pump more earnestly the positive
20 stories of the U.S. and our destinations, the
21 accessibility stories and the rich diversity of
22 our destinations.

1 So pumping those positive stories
2 around the world is going to be one of our big
3 goals. Expansion of our content and programming
4 with that same eye to inclusivity and deeper
5 exploration and then, of course, I'm focused on
6 attracting international meetings, incentives,
7 events, and sports.

8 That's been an area that Brand USA has
9 stuck its toe in and I'm excited to put the whole
10 foot and the whole leg in as we go forward.

11 There's so much opportunity there for
12 the U.S. but also keeping our brand and our
13 country at the forefront of thought leadership
14 especially when it relates to innovation in AI.

15 So I'm happy to be announcing very
16 soon a new position dedicated to AI and
17 innovation in our space, how we're going to
18 engage with partners and advance the industry.

19 So as we move forward I'm committed to
20 a collaborative spirit with all of you. I look
21 forward to feedback today and tomorrow and into
22 the future as we build together this great

1 industry for our country overall and promoting
2 the U.S. as the top destination in the world.

3 So I thank you for your time and I
4 look forward to engaging with you all more. So
5 thank you.

6 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you.
7 Appreciate your comments, and welcome, at least
8 in this role.

9 If we could move forward. Priscilla,
10 are you still with us online? Priscilla is the
11 senior VP of L.A. 28. Hi.

12 MS. CHENG: Hi. Good morning. It's
13 still morning here in Los Angeles, everybody.
14 Really appreciate the conversation and some
15 friends in the room. Appreciate the time that we
16 have.

17 I wanted to -- if it's okay with you
18 we're going to test out my ability to do tech
19 support on my own. I have a little deck to show,
20 just to give folks a little sense of who we are
21 as L.A. 2028 and I'm hopeful that some of you all
22 saw the amazing athletes that were part of the

1 games, and so let's see if I can figure this out.

2 There we go. Do you guys see this
3 here? Awesome.

4 So in 2028 we hope this sounds --
5 seems a little familiar to you, but I think it
6 was the world's first time they heard and saw who
7 we are in Los Angeles.

8 This was part of our 15 minutes of
9 fame that we got during the Paris closing
10 ceremony for the Olympics and you might have seen
11 Snoop and Dre and kind of the amazing way in
12 which we hope to express who we are as the United
13 States and who we are in our diversity and
14 culture.

15 As L.A. 2028 we are a private
16 nonprofit organization with a volunteer board of
17 directors and in terms of our -- how we operate
18 as an organization we have a portion that comes
19 through the IOC and financial support from
20 commercial broadcast partners, licensing
21 agreements, hospitality, ticket sales, and a lot
22 of folks that I think will be on this journey

1 with us to make sure we can both raise enough
2 funds to be able to support the Games that we
3 have, and that is really our purpose of our
4 organization, really, to put on this amazing
5 event in 2028.

6 It will also be not just an amazing
7 event where we'll see a lot of athletes and a
8 little bit for me, we are hopeful that Team USA
9 will be at the top of that medal stand but it
10 will also be the largest peacetime gathering in
11 the world and we're really mindful of that.

12 And not only are we the Olympics but
13 we are also the Paralympics. So the Paralympics
14 will be the third largest peacetime gathering
15 overall, all happening within a 28-day span.

16 As we think about the Games, just kind
17 of a quickly -- not to throw a bunch of numbers
18 at you but just wanted to note a few things here.

19 We anticipate about 12 to 15 million
20 tickets being sold, about 5 million unique
21 attendees, 15,000 athletes that are spread,
22 again, across the Olympics and Paralympics --

1 about 10,000 for the Olympics, about 4,500, 5,000
2 for the Paralympics.

3 We anticipate the largest number of
4 delegation of also heads of states that will be
5 represented, about 150 likely total from heads of
6 state and government.

7 To give you a little perspective, in
8 Paris they had about 89 heads of state at one
9 time during the opening ceremony and we
10 anticipate that number will be significant, given
11 our relationships across the world.

12 Two hundred and six -- we call them
13 national organizing committee but they are bodies
14 represented of nations and territories of teams.
15 Just, again, for perspective the United Nations
16 represents about 193 countries and you kind of
17 see all these other numbers.

18 We're excited about our viewership --
19 3.3 billion viewers around the world. That's a
20 positional number. We kind of -- into our sport
21 program and as a result we anticipate another
22 likely a billion or so viewers on the Games.

1 So we're talking about 4-plus billion
2 viewers who will be watching in excitement across
3 their TVs across the world. And because, you
4 know, we are a sporting organization we just want
5 to give perspective to other events that we all
6 know and love here in the United States.

7 Super Bowl -- and I will say we're
8 very close with our Super Bowl -- our NFL folks
9 because we added flag football. But just, again,
10 perspective. The Olympics, and we do -- we love
11 them dearly. Love flag football.

12 It's 5 million-plus visitors over a
13 28-day period and we know that a lot of
14 individuals that come here will not just come for
15 the Games, will likely spend a good amount of
16 days before and after visiting not just Los
17 Angeles but throughout the United States. Again,
18 just big numbers here.

19 The one that -- attention that we like
20 to draw into this is that we're seven Super Bowls
21 per day -- the equivalent -- in terms of activity
22 for 16 consecutive days, and then two Super Bowls

1 per day for 12 consecutive days for the
2 Paralympics. So, again, just really size and
3 scale.

4 The World Cup as well, looking at
5 competition venues, eight versus 30-plus
6 competition venues, 4x more for the Olympic and
7 Paralympic Games.

8 More numbers. One piece folks like to
9 always talk about, of course, is transportation
10 so I'll just give you a new perspective in terms
11 of peak days.

12 We could be looking at about 1 million
13 or so spectator trips and 10,000-plus workforce
14 transportation trips. So in terms of the needs
15 that we have as an organization, not just how we
16 welcome everyone into the country with all the
17 supports and I appreciate Julie -- we just were -
18 - in D.C. last week and her team are on visa
19 integration, and we welcome the world -- but the
20 workforce we're going to need to have and the
21 transportation resources and many busses that
22 we'll need in order to support the work.

1 We will also as part of this, as part
2 of any mega event, will have the largest
3 broadcast center in the world.

4 So think of NBC times 120 different
5 broadcasters that will all have a footprint in
6 the United States and we'll begin to set up those
7 infrastructures that they have about 18 months
8 prior to the game.

9 We will have broadcasters begin to
10 come to the United States next year -- summer of
11 next year -- as they begin to look at various
12 sites and get briefed on what's happening and
13 where's the opportunity as they plan for the '28
14 games.

15 And, of course, for us here, what's
16 the economic impact and what's the opportunity
17 for us nationally? We, of course, don't just
18 have a Games footprint in the Los Angeles region.

19 You might have heard we'll have
20 softball and canoe slalom in Oklahoma City and
21 traditionally for preliminary football matches
22 there will be likely about four or five venues

1 throughout the country as we do qualifying
2 championships.

3 And then, of course, torch relay. We
4 hope and we know we're going to figure out how to
5 get that torch throughout the country in the
6 spring of 2028 and just national economic impact
7 numbers, and I will say these numbers are
8 probably quite conservative because they're part
9 of a study that was done in 2017 -- \$18 billion
10 of economic output nationally, 110,000 jobs.

11 And I will say I don't know if folks
12 know about the Olympic movement but the volunteer
13 component of this is just as kind of
14 extraordinary and really make the Games what it
15 is.

16 We anticipate about 50,000 volunteers
17 as part of these games.

18 And other kind of revenues and other
19 generation, besides the Games footprint we know
20 that there's going to be a lot of activations
21 across brands and I just actually saw yesterday
22 that Team Netherlands is taking over a campus in

1 Mission Viejo, which is part of the Southern
2 California San Diego area.

3 So you'll begin to also see teams from
4 across the world take over training facilities
5 across the country as they also too try to get on
6 top of -- try to beat Team USA.

7 And that's all that I have. I don't
8 know if it's appropriate to take questions but
9 happy to take them if that makes sense.

10 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you,
11 Priscilla.

12 Anybody have any questions? With the
13 405 I'm sure transportation is going to be just
14 rosy.

15 MS. CHENG: You know, there were jokes
16 about this said in our -- for opening ceremony
17 and folks said the 405 could be it.

18 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you,
19 Priscilla, very much. It's exciting, and
20 obviously in a neighboring state I'm very excited
21 so I hope to spend some more time.

22 Moving on, if we could, Erik is here

1 from U.S. Travel. Where are you? There you are.

2 Erik, if you could kind of give an
3 update, that would be great.

4 MR. HANSEN: Yeah. Thank you, Bill,
5 for inviting us to speak, Assistant Secretary
6 Harris, for having us here today.

7 You know, as an advocacy organization
8 I think oftentimes U.S. Travel is laser focused
9 on the work that needs to be done and the
10 problems that we need to solve.

11 But I think that we could do certainly
12 a better job and align ourselves more often that
13 we need to thank you for all the progress that we
14 have made.

15 So, Assistant Secretary Harris, Deputy
16 Assistant Secretary Lasry, Deputy Assistant
17 Secretary Stufft, your teams are partners in
18 government.

19 Thank you for making travel and
20 tourism a priority, for everything you've done to
21 help this industry recover. It's hard sometimes,
22 I think, to remember all the progress that we

1 have made, given some of the historic challenges,
2 everything from reopening the border to lifting
3 predeparture and testing requirements, and even
4 to what we heard about today, getting visa wait
5 times down to 30 days or less in Brazil and
6 having more visas in circulation today than we
7 ever have before. Those are huge benefits to the
8 travel industry so thank you for that.

9 Progress doesn't happen unless we make
10 that a priority in government. I remember
11 sitting in a coffee shop with Assistant Secretary
12 Harris before he was appointed and he committed
13 to making travel and tourism priorities. Thank
14 you for making good on that commitment.

15 I think we have also seen an example
16 of how this process for progress works best when
17 the government, the Advisory Board, and the
18 advocacy organizations that can work with
19 Congress are aligned.

20 I think that's something that we have
21 to continue. So kind of turning our eyes to the
22 future and what we're focused on for the coming

1 years we just wanted to provide a little bit of
2 an update there. Thankfully, I think there is a
3 lot of alignment.

4 The first is on making sure that we're
5 prepared to welcome the world for major global
6 sporting events. We heard just a massive amount
7 of people who are coming for the Olympics. We
8 have got the World Cup.

9 We have got the Club World Cup coming
10 before that. For the World Cup alone that's 6
11 million international visitors who are coming to
12 the United States. It'll take place in 11
13 cities. It'll be the largest sporting event in
14 world history, so a lot to do there.

15 We're thankful to our partners in
16 government for establishing that White House
17 working group. I think what we need going
18 forward is exactly what the Secretary pointed out
19 -- visibility, Cabinet-level engagement -- to
20 bring the resources that are needed, not because
21 work isn't being done but to maximize what can be
22 done and I think we need to be supportive for you

1 all.

2 With that, we have been working with
3 Congress to continue those calls. We know that
4 there are a few months left in the administration
5 but any progress we can make this year, the
6 further we can move the ball down the field, the
7 easier it will be for any incoming administration
8 to pick up the ball and run with it.

9 It was great to hear TSA provide an
10 update on the fact that they processed 3 million
11 travelers in a single day this year. That's
12 historic.

13 We also want to remind people that
14 within the next five years, that will be the
15 average day of travel. So we have significant
16 resources that we need to invest in TSA to make
17 sure that they have biometric technology,
18 screening technology, to handle that volume
19 consistently.

20 For CBP, we need to support more the
21 efforts that they're making to allow low-risk
22 travelers on low-risk flights to have their

1 identity confirmed through biometrics, to
2 leverage the vetting systems that we have so
3 fewer people have to visit with a Customs officer
4 and we can start to move people through those
5 lines even faster as we get ready for these
6 sporting events.

7 And to Julie and your team, the more
8 resources that we can provide to you to expand
9 interview waiver authority, to make sure that you
10 can set up remote processing locations, to really
11 surge resources in advance of these major events,
12 and then extending visa validity to help get
13 people out of the line are all things that we are
14 committed to helping you on to prepare for these
15 major events.

16 And then, lastly, for the Assistant
17 Secretary, funding is something we're committed
18 to doing as well. I think we're in a great
19 position if Congress is able to pass four-year
20 funding for the Department of Commerce.

21 There's language in both the House and
22 Senate bills that can help us fund the Assistant

1 Secretary of travel and tourism next year so the
2 next administration can hit the ground running.
3 So we're committed to getting that across the
4 goal line.

5 So thank you more than anything for
6 all the progress that you've made. We're looking
7 forward to working with many of you in the coming
8 months ahead.

9 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Great. Thank you,
10 Erik, very much.

11 So now, Julie, we can open this up for
12 public comment.

13 MS. AGUINAGA: Yes. So we did not
14 receive any request to speak for public comment
15 but we did receive a letter from a member of the
16 public, Mitchell Berger, regarding travel
17 medicine training, emergency preparedness for
18 travelers and employees, and full access for
19 service animals when traveling, something similar
20 to what we have heard today.

21 So the TTAB has received this letter
22 and will take it into consideration.

1 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: It's the most
2 documented letter I've ever seen in my life, but
3 it was what we seek. So thank you, Julie.

4 Alex, if I could turn it back to you
5 talk about next steps for the Board and its
6 members.

7 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LASRY:
8 Yes. So, again, thank you guys all for all of
9 your work throughout this term. We have a
10 special thank you to Bill for chairing this.
11 Thank you for everything that you've done. I
12 know this is not light work.

13 As this term comes to an end, our
14 office is preparing an overall summary of the
15 TTAB's work throughout this term as a reference
16 for the next TTAB, so hopefully that this will be
17 useful input as the next term comes onboard.

18 With that said, I hope everyone here
19 will consider applying to serve on the next term
20 of the TTAB to begin in around January 10th,
21 2025. As a reminder, if you're considering to
22 apply you do need to do so before the deadline,

1 which is November 1st.

2 So if you're interested please apply.
3 If you want to talk more about it please reach
4 out to me or Jen or Brian.

5 And, again, just on behalf of the
6 President, the Vice President, the Secretary,
7 just thank you guys all for all of your work.
8 This has been probably one of the most successful
9 TTABs that we have had and we couldn't have done
10 it without all of your leadership. So thank you
11 guys all.

12 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Alex.

13 Recognizing it's -- well, it's not
14 beverage time, it's lunch time. I stand between
15 eating lunch. I will be brief.

16 But, again, I just want to extend,
17 again, particularly to the three of you and Jen
18 of note, the silent partner, all those who really
19 make this work. Thank you.

20 You know, we have come a long way.
21 Given COVID, it was probably hard not to come
22 somewhat from where we were. I remember the day

1 we laid off 62,000 employees and so, you know,
2 just none of that was fun. I'm proud of what we
3 have accomplished, so hopefully you all should
4 feel that as well.

5 There's always work to do. I said it
6 in the beginning -- I'll leave that thought.
7 There will always be work to do at scale. I
8 think your comment about 3 million visitors a day
9 will be the norm in five years is encouraging but
10 also daunting in many respects. And so, you
11 know, keeping the engines focused.

12 I think as we leave this -- and
13 presumably I'm going to stay involved in this
14 space in the industry, potentially not on this
15 Board, but hopefully on others and pushing the
16 agenda and getting us in the forefront as an
17 industry in a real industry that has real jobs,
18 all of the things we know and we talked about
19 it's a passion and it's critical.

20 And so we will do that and we'll
21 commit to doing that. But I just want to say
22 thank you all. It's been a pleasure and I think

1 we have put together -- there was a request at
2 one point for an additional letter and more
3 things to do. I said -- I pushed back.

4 I said, no, I think what's really
5 important is let's focus on the things we have
6 identified because God knows we have identified a
7 lot and really focus on the three or four that
8 will move the needle and we are, and so I
9 appreciate that and I thank you all.

10 So with that said, anyone joining us
11 for lunch? Where are we going?

12 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LASRY:
13 Ocean Prime.

14 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Ocean Prime?
15 Please don't hesitate and I will see you there
16 and thank you all.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
18 went off the record at 12:12 p.m.)
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20
21
22

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

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was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate complete record of the proceedings.



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