

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 19, 2012

We Can't Wait: President Obama Takes Actions to Increase Travel and Tourism in the United States

This morning, President Obama will sign an Executive Order and announce new initiatives to significantly increase travel and tourism in the United States. The U.S. tourism and travel industry is a substantial component of U.S. GDP and employment, representing 2.7% of GDP and 7.5 million jobs in 2010 – with international travel to the United States supporting 1.2 million jobs alone. The travel and tourism industry projects that more than 1 million American jobs could be created over the next decade if the U.S. increased its share of the international travel market. Today's announcement offers important steps to bolster job creation through a range of steps to better promote the United States as a tourism destination and improve secure visa processing. This is the most recent of a series of executive actions the President has announced to put Americans back to work and strengthen the U.S. economy.

"Every year, tens of millions of tourists from all over the world come and visit America. And the more folks who visit America, the more Americans we get back to work. We need to help businesses all across the country grow and create jobs; compete and win. That's how we're going to rebuild an economy where hard work pays off, where responsibility is rewarded, and where anyone can make it if they try," said President Obama.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, international travel resulted in \$134 billion in U.S. exports in 2010 and is the nation's largest service export industry, with 7% of total exports and 24% of service exports. The Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that every additional 65 international visitors to the United States can generate enough exports to support an additional travel and tourism-related job. According to the travel industry and Bureau of Economic Analysis, international travel is particularly important as overseas or "long-haul" travelers spend on average \$4,000 on each visit.

Today's announcement calls for a national strategy to make the United States the world's top travel and tourism destination, as part of a comprehensive effort to spur job creation. The number of travelers from emerging economies with growing middle classes – such as China, Brazil, and India – is projected to grow by 135%, 274%, and 50% respectively by 2016 when compared to 2010. Nationals from these three countries

contributed approximately \$15 billion dollars and thousands of jobs to the U.S. economy in 2010. In addition, Chinese and Brazilian tourists currently spend more than \$6,000 and \$5,000 respectively each, per trip, according to the Department of Commerce. The Department of State has made tremendous progress in processing non-immigrant visas from these key markets, allowing them to issue more than 7.5 million visas in the last fiscal year, a 17% increase from the previous fiscal year. In the 2011 fiscal year, consular officers adjudicated more than a million visa applications in China and more than 800,000 in Brazil, representing 34 % growth in China and 42% growth in Brazil. Improving visa processing capacity for China and Brazil is particularly important because of this growth.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Today's Executive Order charges several agencies to take part in efforts to increase travel and tourism in the United States:

- The Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior will be charged with:
 - Co-leading an interagency task force to develop recommendations for a National Travel & Tourism Strategy to promote domestic and international travel opportunities throughout the United States, thereby expanding job creation. This Task Force will coordinate with the Corporation for Travel Promotion (currently doing business as BrandUSA), a non-profit corporation established by Congress through the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 to promote travel to the United States, and the Tourism Policy Council to ensure private sector participation and cross-agency coordination.
 - A particular focus of the Task Force will be on strategies for increasing tourism and recreation jobs by promoting visits to our national treasures. The Department of the Interior manages iconic destinations in our national parks, wildlife refuges, cultural and historic sites, monuments and other public lands that attract travelers from around the country and the globe. In 2010, more than 400 million visits were made by American and international travelers to these lands, contributing nearly \$50 billion in economic activity and 400,000 jobs. Eco-tourism and outdoor recreation also have an outsize impact on rural economies, particularly in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming.
- The Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security will be charged with:
 - Increasing non-immigrant visa processing capacity in China and Brazil by 40% in 2012.
 - Ensuring that 80% of non-immigrant visa applicants are interviewed within three weeks of receipt of application.

- Increasing efforts to expand the Visa Waiver Program and travel by nationals eligible to participate in the Visa Waiver Program, and expanding reciprocal trusted travel programs for expedited travel (such as the Global Entry program).
- The Department of Commerce will be charged with:
 - Establishing and maintaining a publicly available website with key information and statistics from across the Federal Government to assist industry and travelers in understanding visa processes in key travel and tourism markets, and entry times into the United States.

Additional initiatives announced today include:

- New Pilot Program and Rule Change for Visa Processing in China and Brazil:
 - Today, the Departments of State and Homeland Security announced a pilot program to simplify and speed up the non-immigrant visa process for certain applicants, including the ability to waive interviews for some very low-risk applicants, such as individuals from any country renewing non-immigrant visas, or, in Brazil, younger or older first-time applicants. Link to fact sheet [HERE](#) for more information.
- Final Rule to Expand and Make the Global Entry Program Permanent:
 - Global Entry is a program within the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection that was created as a pilot in 2008 to facilitate expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Through a final rule, the Administration will expand and make the Global Entry program permanent. Due in part to innovative public-private partnerships, the Global Entry program now has more than 246,000 members, more than one million trusted travelers have Global Entry benefits, and efforts are underway to expand enrollment even further. There are currently 131 Global Entry kiosks at 20 airports and since launching, members have used Global Entry kiosks over 1.7 million times, saving CBP officers over 36,450 inspection hours – staff hours that CBP has then re-allocated to expedite regular passenger queues. This final rule will allow the program to be expanded to an additional 4 airports in Minneapolis, Charlotte, Denver and Phoenix, making the Global Entry program and expedited clearance available in airports that service approximately 97% of international travelers.
- Appoint new members to the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board:
 - A new membership of 32 private sector CEOs have been appointed by Commerce Secretary Bryson to serve on the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will build upon the work undertaken by the past Board addressing travel facilitation, visa policy, improving the international travel entry experience, aviation security, energy security, crisis communications and research and data, among other issues. This Board consists of corporate executives across the nation,

representing all aspects of the travel and tourism industry, who are appointed to a two-year term to advise the Secretary of Commerce on policies affecting the travel and tourism industry. See the full list of new members [HERE](#).

- Nomination of Taiwan to Visa Waiver Program:
 - Currently, more than 60% of international tourists do not require a U.S. visa, in most cases because they travel under the Visa Waiver Program. The Secretary of State has formally requested that the Secretary of Homeland Security consider Taiwan for the Visa Waiver Program. Over the past year, Taiwan has undertaken significant efforts to improve its law enforcement and document security standards to meet the strict requirements for Visa Waiver Program eligibility. Under the Visa Waiver Program, participating nationals can travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. The program was established to promote travel and tourism with our foreign partners, stimulate the tourism industry, and permit the Department of State to focus consular resources in other areas. Since November 2008, the Department of Homeland Security has added nine countries to the Visa Waiver Program, bringing the program total to 36 countries.

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Published on *Department of Commerce* (<http://www.commerce.gov>)

Coinciding with Presidential Visit, Secretary Bryson Welcomes New Travel and Tourism Advisory Board Members

Submitted on January 19, 2012 - 8:30am

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 19, 2012

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Following Presidential Announcement of National Travel and Tourism Strategy Bryson to Swear in 32 Newly Appointed Members

U.S. Secretary of Commerce John Bryson will conduct a swearing-in ceremony today and meet with the 32 newly appointed members of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB). Bryson's discussion with the Board will follow the President's announcement of a National Travel & Tourism Strategy and corresponding Executive Order from the President. The Board, first created in 2003 by then Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, provides stakeholder feedback on the challenges being faced by the U.S. travel and tourism industry, as well as ideas for what the federal government can do to help strengthen this important sector.

"This Board represents the eyes and ears of our nation's travel and tourism industry and I am committed to working with each of the esteemed members to bring more visitors to the United States," Bryson said. "I look forward to putting ideas into action, and to helping bolster job creation in this critical economic sector, which already supports more than 7.5 million jobs throughout the country."

Travel and tourism is a \$1.2 trillion sector of the U.S. economy or nearly three percent of Gross Domestic Product. Critical to the nation's overall economic health, the travel and tourism industry is one of the top employers for more than half of the U.S. states and territories. The U.S. travel and tourism industry is on pace for a record-setting year. Through November 2011, international visitors spent an estimated \$139.4 billion on U.S. travel and tourism-related goods and services year to date, an increase of 13 percent compared to the same period in 2010. The United States recorded a \$38.4 billion trade surplus for travel and tourism through November 2011.

The previous Board delivered significant policy recommendations regarding travel facilitation, travel promotion, and data and research, some of which played a role in today's Executive Order announcement.

For example, the previous Board made important recommendations regarding visa facilitation, which have been incorporated into the President's strategy.

The Board consists of up to 32 members that advise the Secretary of Commerce on government policies and programs that affect the U.S. travel and tourism industry, offers counsel on current and emerging issues, and provides a forum for discussing and proposing solutions to industry-related problems. Members represent companies and organizations in the travel and tourism industry from a broad range of products and services, company sizes and geographic locations. More than half of the newly appointed members are serving for the first time as advisors on the Board.

Board members are listed below (note: new members of the Board are indicated with a *).

The full list of Board members is available on the [Travel and Tourism Advisory Board website](#).

2012-2014 U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board

Chair, Todd Davidson, Chief Executive Officer, Travel Oregon, OR
Vice-Chair, Sam Gilliland, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sabre Holdings, TX
Holly Agra, President, Chicago's First Lady Cruises, IL
Rosemarie Andolino, Commissioner, Chicago Airport Authority, IL*
Maureen Bausch, Executive Vice President of Business Development, Mall of America, MN*
Linda Carlisle, Secretary, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, NC*
Maryann Ferenc, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mise en Place, Inc., FL
Elliott Ferguson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Destination DC, DC*
Michael Gibbons, President, Mainstreet Ventures, MI*
Mario Gonzalez-Lafuente, Executive Director, Puerto Rico Tourism Company, PR*
Robin Hayes, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, JetBlue Airways, NY*
Kirk Hoessle, President, Alaska Wildland Adventures, AK*
Hubert Joly, President and Chief Executive Officer, Carlson Companies, MN
Robert Katz, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Vail Resorts, CO*
Holly Arnold Kinney, Executive Director, The Fort, LLC, CO*
Robert Lynch, President, Americans for the Arts, DC*
Laura Mandala, Managing Director, Mandala Research, LLC, VA*
Kathleen Matthews, Executive Vice President, Marriott International, Inc., MD*
Doug Parker, Chief Executive Officer, US Airways, AZ*
Chandrakant "C.K." Patel, President, BVM Holdings, Inc., GA
J. Stephen Perry, President and Chief Executive Officer, New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, LA
Rossi Ralenkotter, President and Chief Executive Officer, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Auth., NV
Olga Ramudo, President and Chief Executive Officer, Express Travel of Miami, Inc., FL*
Adam Sacks, Managing Director, Tourism Economics, PA
Joseph W. Saunders, Chairman and CEO, Visa, Inc., CA
Ronald Solimon, President and Chief Executive Officer, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Inc. and Indian Pueblos Marketing, Inc., NM
John Sprouls, Chief Executive Officer, Universal Orlando Resort and Executive Vice President, Universal Parks and Resorts, FL
Greg Stubblefield, Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, Enterprise Holdings, MO
Christopher Thompson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Visit Florida, FL*
Steven Thompson, Chief Executive Officer, Johns Hopkins Medicine International, MD*
Carol Wallace, President and Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Convention Center Corporation, CA*
Jonathan Zuk, Founder, Chief Executive Officer and President, Amadeo Travel Solutions, NJ *

Ex Officio Members

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of Interior
The Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation
The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security

Source URL (retrieved on 02/21/2012 - 9:17am): <http://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2012/01/19/coinciding-presidential-visit-secretary-bryson-welcomes-new-travel-an>

Visa Pilot Program

Fact Sheet

Office of the Spokesperson

U.S. State Department

Washington, DC

January 19, 2012

Today the President announced that the Departments of State and Homeland Security are working together to improve and speed up the visa process for certain categories of travelers.

Since 9/11, the United States has developed an intensive, multi-layered visa screening process, including multiple biographic and biometric checks, all supported by a sophisticated global information technology network. We perform these checks on every visa applicant, without exception.

Under a new initiative, in select circumstances, qualified foreign visitors who were interviewed and thoroughly screened in conjunction with a prior visa application may be able to renew their visas without undergoing another interview. Eliminating interviews for these applicants will save them time and money and encourage them to choose the United States again as their tourism destination. It will also free our resources to interview more first-time applicants.

The pilot program will streamline visa processing for certain low-risk applicants, such as individuals renewing expired visas, or some categories of younger or older first-time applicants. We expect that this will benefit tens of thousands of applicants in Brazil and China; saving them time and money, and encouraging them to choose to visit the United States again. However, given that national security remains this Administration's highest priority, individuals identified as higher-risk will remain subject to interviews – in addition to the full screening and review all visa applicants receive.

For example, this will make it much easier for many Chinese tourists to renew their visas – a group that spends more than \$6,000 per person, per trip, according to the Department of Commerce. Over the course of the year, this policy could open as many as 100,000 interview appointments for Chinese travelers applying for visas for the first time. That increase in tourism could support as many as 1,500 travel and tourism-related jobs.

Consular officers will continue to use their authority to interview any visa applicant as required for national security.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/01/181500.htm#>
February 21, 2012