



U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2010

Contact: Kristy Chandler
kchandler@ustravel.org
202-408-2172

Cathy Keefe
ckeefe@ustravel.org
202-408-2183

**President Obama Tells the World ‘Come to America’ with Signing of
First-Ever U.S. Travel Promotion Program**

***Tax-Free Stimulus Expected to Create 40,000 Jobs and Boost Inbound Travel to
United States***

WASHINGTON, DC -- The travel community celebrated a major victory today when President Obama signed into law the first-ever national travel promotion and communications program to attract more international travelers to the U.S. The historic moment, commemorated during a White House signing ceremony, is a major step in addressing America’s decline in attracting overseas visitors to the U.S. during the past decade.

The Act is in response to worrisome evidence that the U.S. is losing ground to other countries in the global travel market. The U.S. welcomed 2.4 million fewer overseas visitors in 2009 than in 2000, and the failure to simply keep pace with the growth in international long-haul travel since 2000 has cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$509 billion in total spending and \$32 billion in direct tax receipts, according to the U.S. Travel Association. The Travel Promotion Act will counteract this trend by creating a campaign to promote the United States as a premier destination and explain changing travel security policies to foreign visitors.

“By signing the Travel Promotion Act, President Obama has acted to support the power of travel to serve as an economic stimulant, job generator and diplomatic tool,” said Roger Dow, president & CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “This program will create tens of thousands of American jobs and help reverse negative perceptions about travel to the United States.”

Dow thanks President Obama and Congressional supporters of this legislation, in particular Senators Byron Dorgan (D-ND), John Ensign (R-NV), Harry Reid (D-NV), Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Representatives Bill Delahunt (D-10-MA), Roy Blunt (R-7-MO) and Sam Farr (D-17-CA) who championed the bipartisan legislation over the last several years. “The strong bipartisan support for this bill clearly demonstrates consensus on the value of this tax-free stimulus for job creation and economic growth,” Dow said.

“We have already seen the benefits of a public-private partnership in states like California and Florida,” said Caroline Beteta, president & CEO, California Travel & Tourism Commission. “Destinations and local communities across the country will benefit from a comprehensive national effort to market the U.S. A. brand. The Travel Promotion Act will help keep the United States competitive in the international marketplace.”

Oxford Economics estimates that a successful national promotion will yield \$4 billion in new spending annually, create 40,000 new jobs and generate \$321 million in new tax revenue each year. The Congressional Budget Office reported that the Travel Promotion Act would reduce the federal deficit by \$425 million over ten years.

“Today, America extends a heartfelt ‘Welcome’ to the rest of the world,” said James Rasulo, senior executive vice president and chief financial officer of The Walt Disney Company and past national chair of the U.S. Travel Association. “It is a great example of the innovative solutions government and industry can create when they work together toward a common goal.” As former Chairman of U.S. Travel, Mr. Rasulo oversaw the development of the Blueprint to Discover America that identified solutions for improving U.S. visa, entry and promotion programs.

The public-private Corporation for Travel Promotion established by the Travel Promotion Act combines the accountability of the government with the expertise of the private sector. The U.S. Department of Commerce will oversee the Corporation and work with the Departments of State and Homeland Security to nominate an 11-member board comprised of representatives from various segments of the travel community. Once the board is in place, it will select an executive director to run the operations of the Corporation. The Corporation will develop a multi-channel marketing and communications program to attract more international visitors and explain changing travel security policies.

The initiative will be funded through a matching program featuring up to \$100 million in private sector contributions and a \$10 fee on foreign travelers who do not pay \$131 for a visa to enter the United States. The fee will be collected once every two years in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security’s Electronic System for Travel Authorization. No money is provided by U.S. taxpayers.

For more information about the Travel Promotion Act, please visit www.poweroftravel.org or www.ustravel.org.

###