H. R. 6965

To promote travel and tourism in the United States, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 2022

Ms. Titus (for herself, Mr. Case, and Mr. Young) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

A BILL

To promote travel and tourism in the United States, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

3 This Act may be cited as the “Visit America Act”.

4 SEC. 2. PURPOSES.

5 The purposes of this Act are—

6 (1) to support the travel and tourism industry,

7 which produces economic impacts that are vital to

8 our national economy; and
(2) to establish national goals for international visitors to the United States, including—

(A) recommendations for achieving such goals and timelines for implementing such recommendations;

(B) coordination between Federal and State agencies;

(C) the resources needed by each Government agency to achieve such goals; and

(D) the number of international visitors and the value of national travel exports.

SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) setting a national goal for the number of international visitors to the United States is vital for aligning Federal tourism policy to support American jobs and economic growth;

(2) setting a national goal for travel exports is vital for aligning Federal tourism policy to support American jobs, increase travel exports, and improve our Nation’s balance of trade;

(3) the travel industry is an essential part of the United States services exports with respect to business, education, medical, and leisure travel;
(4) the promotion of travel and visitation by the Corporation for Travel Promotion (doing business as “Brand USA”) is vital to increasing visitation and articulating the visitation laws of the United States; and

(5) there is an urgent need for a coordinated travel and tourism industry response and strategy to respond to the current state of such industry and future unforeseen circumstances that may impact the travel and tourism industry.

SEC. 4. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM.

Section 2(d) of the Reorganization Plan Numbered 3 of 1979 (93 Stat. 1382; 5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(1) by striking “There shall be in the Department two additional Assistant Secretaries” and inserting “(1) There shall be in the Department 3 additional Assistant Secretaries, including the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism,”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(2) The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism shall—

“(A) be appointed by the President, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate; and

and
“(B) report directly to the Under Secretary for International Trade.”

SEC. 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM.

(a) VISITATION GOALS.—The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism (referred to in this section as the “Assistant Secretary”), appointed pursuant to section 2(d) of the Reorganization Plan Numbered 3 of 1979, as amended by section 4, shall—

(1) establish an annual goal, consistent with the goals of the travel and tourism strategy developed pursuant to section 6(1), for—

(A) the number of international visitors to the United States; and

(B) the value of travel exports;

(2) develop recommendations for achieving the annual goals established pursuant to paragraph (1);

(3) ensure that travel and tourism policy is developed in consultation with—

(A) the Tourism Policy Council;

(B) the Secretary of Homeland Security;

(C) the National Travel and Tourism Office;

(D) Brand USA;
(E) the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board; and

(F) travel industry partners, including public and private destination marketing organizations, travel and tourism suppliers, and labor representatives from these industries;

(4) establish short-, medium-, and long-term timelines for implementing the recommendations developed pursuant to paragraph (2);

(5) conduct Federal agency needs assessments, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, to identify the resources, statutory or regulatory changes, and private sector engagement needed to achieve the annual visitation goals; and

(6) provide assessments and recommendations to—

(A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and

(C) the public through a publicly accessible website.

(b) VISÁ ADJUDICACIÓN.—The Assistant Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall—
(1) explore strategies for improving visitor visa processing with respect to—

(A) the maximum time for processing visas, by visitation type;

(B) regulatory and policy changes needed to meet the visa processing goals referred to in subparagraph (A), including changes regarding technology, processing centers, and training; and

(C) streamlining visa applications and adjudications, including application design and data collection procedures; and

(2) explore opportunities to establish pilot programs to integrate technology into the visitor visa adjudication process, including video conferencing and biometrics.

(c) DOMESTIC TRAVEL AND TOURISM.—The Assistant Secretary, to the extent feasible, shall—

(1) evaluate, on an ongoing basis, domestic policy options for supporting competitiveness with respect to the strengths, weaknesses, and growth of the domestic travel industry;

(2) develop recommendations and goals to support and enhance domestic tourism, separated by business and leisure; and
(3) engage public and private stakeholders to support domestic tourism.

(d) WORKFORCE.—The Assistant Secretary shall—

(1) consult with the Secretary of Labor to develop strategies and best practices for improving the timeliness and reliability of travel and tourism workforce data;

(2) work with the Secretary of Labor and the Bureau of Economic Analysis to improve travel and tourism industry data; and

(3) provide recommendations for policy enhancements and efficiencies.

(e) TRAVEL EXPORT PROMOTION.—The Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets and the Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service, shall work to promote and facilitate travel exports abroad and ensure competitiveness by engaging in, at a minimum—

(1) promoting meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions;

(2) emphasizing rural and other destinations rich in cultural heritage or ecological tourism, among other uniquely American destinations; and
(3) promoting sports and recreation events and activities, which shall be hosted in the United States.

(f) Recovery Strategy.—

(1) Initial Recovery Strategy.—Not later than 1 year after amounts are appropriated to accomplish the purposes of this section, the Assistant Secretary, in consultation with public and private stakeholders identified in subsection (a)(3) and public health officials, shall develop and implement a COVID–19 public health emergency recovery strategy to assist the United States travel and tourism industry to quickly recover from the pandemic.

(2) Future Recovery Strategies.—After assisting in the implementation of the strategy developed pursuant to paragraph (1), the Assistant Secretary, in consultation with appropriate public and private stakeholders, shall develop additional recovery strategies for the travel and tourism industry in anticipation of other unforeseen catastrophic events that would significantly affect the travel and tourism industry, such as hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, tornadoes, terrorist attacks, and pandemics.
(3) **Cost-Benefit Analysis.—**In developing the COVID–19 public health emergency recovery strategy under paragraph (1) and additional recovery strategies for the travel and tourism industry under paragraph (2), the Assistant Secretary shall conduct cost-benefit analyses that take into account the health and economic effects of public health mitigation measures on the travel and tourism industry.

(g) **Reporting Requirements.—**

(1) **Assistant Secretary.—**The Assistant Secretary shall produce an annual forecasting report on the travel and tourism industry, to the extent feasible, which shall include current and anticipated—

(A) domestic employment needs;

(B) international inbound volume and spending, taking into account the lasting effects of the COVID–19 public health emergency and the impact of the recovery strategy implemented pursuant to subsection (f)(1); and

(C) domestic volume and spending, including Federal and State public land travel and tourism data.
(2) Bureau of Economic Analysis.—The Director of the Bureau of Economic Analysis should annually update, to the extent feasible, the Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts, including—

(A) State level travel and tourism spending data;

(B) travel and tourism workforce data for full-time and part-time employment; and

(C) Federal and State public lands spending data.

(3) National Travel and Tourism Office.—The Director of the National Travel and Tourism Office—

(A) in partnership with the Bureau of Economic Analysis, shall report international arrival and spending data on a regular monthly schedule, which shall be made available to the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board and to the public through a publicly available website; and

(B) shall include questions in the Survey of International Air Travelers regarding wait-times, visits to public lands, and State data, to the extent applicable.
SEC. 6. TRAVEL AND TOURISM STRATEGY.

Not less frequently than once every 10 years, the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, the Tourism Policy Council, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall develop and submit to Congress a 10-year travel and tourism strategy, which shall include—

(1) the establishment of goals with respect to the number of annual international visitors to the United States and the annual value of travel exports during such 10-year period;

(2) the resources needed to achieve the goals established pursuant to paragraph (1); and

(3) recommendations for statutory or regulatory changes that would be necessary to achieve such goals.

SEC. 7. UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD.

Section 3 of the Act entitled “An Act to encourage travel in the United States, and for other purposes” (15 U.S.C. 1546) is amended—

(1) by amending the section heading to read as follows: “united states travel and tourism advisory board; advisory committee”; and

(2) by striking “The Secretary of Commerce is authorized” and inserting the following:
“(a) United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board.—

“(1) In general.—There is established the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Board’), the members of which shall be appointed by the Secretary of Commerce for 2-year terms from among companies and organizations in the travel and tourism industry.

“(2) Executive Director.—The Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism shall serve as the Executive Director of the Board.

“(3) Executive Secretariat.—The Director of the National Travel and Tourism Office of the International Trade Administration shall serve as the Executive Secretariat for the Board.

“(4) Functions.—The Board’s Charter shall specify that the Board will—

“(A) serve as the advisory body to the Secretary of Commerce on matters relating to the travel and tourism industry in the United States;

“(B) advise the Secretary of Commerce on Government policies and programs that affect the United States travel and tourism industry;
“(C) offer counsel on current and emerging issues;
“(D) provide a forum for discussing and proposing solutions to problems related to the travel and tourism industry; and
“(E) provide advice regarding the domestic travel and tourism industry as an economic engine.

“(5) Recovery strategy.—The Board shall assist the Assistant Secretary in the development and implementation of the COVID–19 public health emergency recovery strategy required under section 5(f)(1) of the Visit America Act.

“(b) Advisory Committee for Promotion of Tourist Travel.—The Secretary of Commerce is authorized.”

SEC. 8. DATA ON DOMESTIC TRAVEL AND TOURISM.

The Secretary of Commerce, subject to the availability of appropriations, shall collect and make public aggregate data on domestic travel and tourism trends by individuals traveling between points within the United States.

SEC. 9. DEFINED TERM.

In this Act, the term “COVID–19 public health emergency”—
(1) means the public health emergency first declared on January 31, 2020, by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) with respect to COVID–19; and

(2) includes any renewal of such declaration pursuant to such section 319.