



May 8, 2014

Dear Representative Bilirakis:

ASAE represents more than 21,000 association executives and industry partners from nearly 10,000 tax-exempt organizations. Our members manage leading trade associations, individual membership societies, and voluntary organizations in every state as well as in 50 countries around the globe. Associations are highly supportive of policies that facilitate international travel to meetings and conventions here in the U.S.

As a stakeholder in the travel industry, ASAE fully supports your bill, H.R. 4450 / S. 2250 - the Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2014. This bipartisan bill will reauthorize Brand USA, allowing the public-private partnership to continue its critical work promoting the U.S. abroad and attracting international travelers to our shores.

International travel is a major economic driver for the U.S. economy. When international visitors travel to the United States, they inject new money into the U.S. economy by staying in hotels, spending in stores, visiting attractions and eating at restaurants. In 2013, international visitors to the U.S. spent \$180.7 billion, making it the leading service export of all U.S. industries.

While it is clear that travel is helping drive the U.S. economic recovery, the benefits could be far greater. The United States' share of global international long-haul travel actually fell from 17 percent in 2000 to just 13.2 percent in 2013 despite a nearly 60 percent growth in overall global travel. While global international travel boomed over the last decade, America failed to keep pace. In 2010, Brand USA was created by the Travel Promotion Act to reverse this trend and has already begun to show an impressive return on investment.

For every \$1 Brand USA spent in 2013 promoting the U.S. abroad, \$47 dollars were spent by added international visitors. For fiscal year 2013 alone, Brand USA attracted 1.1 million additional international travelers whose spending supported more than 53,000 new American jobs. The average international visitor spends \$4,500 per trip on American goods and services in communities across the country.

This legislation would help the U.S. regain our lost market share by allowing Brand USA to continue promoting the U.S. in what has become a truly competitive global travel market. Half of Brand USA's budget is funded by the private sector, with a match (up to \$100 million) provided by \$10 from a fee assessed on visa-free international travelers screened through Department of Homeland Security's Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). Under this funding structure, Brand USA benefits the U.S. economy at no cost to American taxpayers.

I urge you to help us create more American jobs by advancing H.R. 4450 / S. 2250 - the Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2014, a common sense, bipartisan approach to boosting travel to the U.S. and strengthening our economy.

Sincerely,



John H. Graham IV, CAE
President and CEO