



## M E M O R A N D U M

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DATE: March 21, 2007

TO: TBR Membership

FROM: Jonathan M. Tisch, TBR Chairman

RE: Senate and House Hearings

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Yesterday was an eventful and productive day for the travel and tourism industry on Capitol Hill. In the morning, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Interstate Commerce, Trade, and Tourism, chaired by Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND), held a hearing focusing on promoting travel to America, examining economic and security concerns. Other Senators attending were Chairman of the full committee Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Subcommittee Ranking Member Jim DeMint (R-SC). The first panel of witnesses included federal officials from the Departments of Commerce, State and Homeland Security. They commented on government's efforts to improve the travel process for inbound international travelers. The second panel, composed of leading state tourism officials, highlighted the importance of a nationally coordinated effort to invite more international travelers to America. Chairman Inouye promised legislation to create the structure for such an effort within 10 days.

Recognizing the need to first improve our nation's visa policies and entry procedures, industry officials also testified in the afternoon before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight on the important role of travel and tourism for enhancing America's image around the globe. TBR President Chuck Merin and Discover America Partnership Executive Director Geoff Freeman testified along with Peter Gadiel, president of 9/11 Families for a Secure America. The hearing, presided over by Subcommittee Chairman William Delahunt (D-MA), was also attended by Ranking Member Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus Co-chairs Sam Farr (D-CA) and Jon Porter (R-NV).

Amid concerns that the travel industry's recommendations might threaten national security, Chuck and Geoff emphasized that security and travel are not mutually exclusive and that we have consistently called for stronger security – but security that is implemented in a welcoming and respectful fashion to international travelers. They highlighted the border security enhancements called for by the travel and tourism industry in the Discover America Partnership *Blueprint* and the public diplomacy benefits that international travelers bring when they come to America, experience people-to-people communication, and go home and tell friends and family about their time in the U.S. Their testimonies will be posted on TBR's website for you to view by week's end.

We continue to gain momentum as Congress begins to recognize more and more the inherent power of travel. Our next step is to retain the current *Blueprint* provisions in the 9/11 bill and attempt to include others during the House-Senate conference process. We will keep you up-to-date on our progress.