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Welcome to VISIT DENVER's quarterly *Policy Perspectives* newsletter highlighting local, state and federal issues impacting the tourism and hospitality industry.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Carrie Atiyeh, Director of Government & Community Affairs, at catiye@visitdenver.com or (303) 571-9466.



LOCAL NEWS



- Denver City Council gave final approval to the package of [General Obligation \(GO\) Bond](#) projects totaling \$937 million that will be decided by Denver voters in the November 7 election. VISIT DENVER supported inclusion of nearly 10 projects that advance key initiatives in the [Denver Tourism Roadmap](#), including funding for the 16th Street Mall, enhanced bike infrastructure, support for Denver's cultural institutions and new and improved parks.
- Creation of the [Denver Tourism Improvement District \(TID\)](#) took another positive step forward when Denver City Council unanimously approved the creation ordinance at the end of August. The TID will be decided by Denver voters in the November 7 election.
- City Council President Albus Brooks is championing the [Breathe Easy campaign](#), a proposed ordinance that would prohibit smoking along the 16th Street Mall. VISIT DENVER's Board of Directors voted to support this initiative as an effort to provide a clean, safe and healthy downtown environment for visitors, residents and workers.
- The [Denver Green Roofs Initiative](#), Initiative 300 on the November ballot, seeks to mandate vegetative or solar roofs on all Denver buildings greater than 25,000 sq. ft. While the goals are commendable, the VISIT DENVER Board of Directors voted to [oppose the initiative](#) and recommends a collaborative approach to assess voluntary options and incentives that further promote sustainability in Denver.
- The [Outdoor Downtown Plan](#) was launched by numerous stakeholders, including VISIT DENVER, to enhance downtown's existing parks and open spaces and to add new outdoor spaces to enjoy. The Outdoor Downtown Plan supports the vision of the Denver Tourism Roadmap, for Denver to be America's leading outdoor city, known to visitors for its urban, active and cultural experiences.
- Efforts to redevelop the 16th Street Mall continue to make progress by project partners RTD, the Downtown Denver Partnership, Denver Community Planning and Development, Denver Urban Renewal Authority and Federal Transit Administration. [Three alternate alignments](#) were recently unveiled, and public input is being sought online and during an upcoming open house on October 18th.
- We hope to see you at the [108th Annual VISIT DENVER Partnership Meeting](#) on Tuesday, November 14th at the Sewell Grand Ballroom! All partners are encouraged to attend this free event that will highlight tourism and marketing achievements in 2017.

- A delegation of economic development representatives, tourism leaders and elected officials including Mayor Hancock launched the first non-stop [Norwegian Air](#) flight from London's Gatwick airport to Denver. The new route is projected to create 600 jobs and have an annual economic impact of \$7 million.
- In preparation for [Edelweiss Air's](#) new non-stop route connecting Denver and Zurich beginning next summer, CEO Bernd Bauer visited Denver to meet with city officials and tourism industry representatives. The new flight is targeted specifically to leisure visitors and VISIT DENVER is supporting marketing efforts.
- It has been announced that [Denver, Park City and Reno](#) are potential U.S. host cities for the 2026 or 2030 Winter Olympics.
- Licensing, tax collection and enforcement of [short-term rentals \(STRs\)](#) continues to make positive progress in Denver. As of the end of September, 67% of STRs have been licensed and \$950,000 in lodger's tax has been collected through July.

STATE NEWS



- The Colorado Legislature was called back into [special session](#) by Governor Hickenlooper to fix a budget error in Senate Bill (SB) 267, which passed at the end of the 2017 session. As signed, the bill restricts RTD, Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and other special districts from collecting retail marijuana taxes, which will lead to budget shortfalls. However, Senate Republicans blocked the bill and the session ended without a fix.
- The Tourism Industry Association of Colorado (TIAC), the state-wide tourism advocacy association, will be conducting meetings with key legislators in advance of the 2018 session. TIAC advocates for Colorado's tourism industry which employs over 165,000 people and generates [\\$1.2 billion in state and local taxes](#).
- Save the date for TIAC's annual legislative reception, which will be held at the Brown Palace on Monday, January 22nd. More details to come for this great event that highlights our industry and draws many of our state legislators.
- The [Legislative Council](#) and [Office of State Planning and Budgeting](#) have issued their budget forecasts, which both project a positive budget increase of approximately \$600 million in FY18-19 compared to FY17-18.

FEDERAL NEWS



- President Trump and [Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak](#) met in September to discuss a number of economic and security issues, including Malaysia's continued progress toward meeting the requirements of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to enhance travel between the two countries.
- President Trump issued a [new, revised travel ban policy](#). Travel restrictions are still in place for Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Somalia but have been dropped for Sudan. New restrictions will go into effect for travelers from Chad, North Korea and Venezuela.
- The National Travel and Tourism Office reports that international visitors in the first four months of 2017 declined by 1.2% compared to 2016 and total overseas travelers declined by 4.3% in the same

time period.

- The Senate FY18 transportation funding bill includes a Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) increase, which has long been a key legislative priority for the tourism and airport industries to fund capacity and safety projects. Because the House companion bill does not include a similar provision, the two chambers are now in the final stages of negotiations.
- The U.S. Travel Association has released [Travel: America's Unsung Hero of Job Creation](#), highlighting the positive impacts of the travel industry on the U.S. economy. The report finds that U.S. travel jobs increased by 17 percent compared to 13 percent growth in the rest of the private sector from 2010-2016.
- Travel in the U.S. is a significant economic driver based on [updated 2016 figures](#): \$990 billion of direct spending, \$158 billion in tax generation, and 8.6 million direct jobs.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES



J1 Exchange Visitor Program Under Attack

On April 18, 2017, President Trump signed a “Buy American, Hire American” Executive Order (EO). The EO is focused on strengthening the “Buy American” policies of the U.S. government, which includes reforming the H-1B skilled worker visa program. While Department of State J1 Exchange Visitor Programs were never specifically mentioned in the EO, multiple sources are now reporting that senior White House staff are discussing changes, cuts, or complete elimination of a number of privately-funded J1 exchange programs, including the Summer Work Travel (SWT), Intern, Trainee, Camp Counselor, and Au Pair programs.

The J1 Exchange Visitor Program provides a critical stream of employees to hotels and resorts in Colorado – many of which would be economically devastated without the influx of J1 participants during peak seasons. CHLA and AH&LA are actively supporting the lobbying efforts of Americans for Cultural Exchange to ensure that this important program isn't eliminated. Click the links below for more information on this effort:

[Buy American, Hire American Fact Sheet](#)

[Americans for Cultural Exchange Statement & Coalition List](#)



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