

AUGUST 2026 | QUICK MESSAGING GUIDE

The World Cup opened the door for growth—now Washington needs policy that keeps it open.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

- **Americans welcomed World Cup visitors with open arms:** [86% felt genuine joy watching them enjoy the U.S.](#), and 81% said it gave them a sense of pride in being American. 70% want the U.S. to host more major global events. The World Cup opened a decade of opportunity—government must keep the momentum going for events like the 2028 Olympics, 2031 Rugby World Cup, 2031 Women's World Cup and 2034 Olympics.
- **Firsthand travel experiences improve perception:** [91% of recent international travelers](#) were satisfied with their trip, 83% felt welcome and 61% left with a more favorable opinion toward America. World Cup visitors found a deeper appreciation for our communities, culture and food—and the American people are our best ambassadors for improving the perception of visiting the U.S.
- **First half of 2026 shows domestic strength but a mixed international picture:** Travel spending rose 3.6%, air travel held near record levels and hotels had RevPAR growth and record room bookings. This happened despite a record-long government shutdown, elevated fuel prices and a major airline closure. Enthusiasm for travel holds strong, even among rising costs and continued uncertainty—nearly 90% of American travelers have a trip planned within the next six months. After falling 5.5% in 2025 (Canada down 21%), international inbound visits were down less than 1% year over year in the first half—stabilizing but still soft—with Mexico remaining a bright spot up 13%.

THE RISKS

- **A deepening trade imbalance:** America's \$68 billion travel trade surplus has flipped to a \$40 billion deficit in just over a decade. Every 1% drop in international spending costs \$1.8 billion in export revenue and thousands of American jobs.
- **Travelers could pay up to \$1,185 before boarding a plane:** A \$185 application fee, the \$250 Visa Integrity Fee and an optional \$750 to expedite an interview creates by far the world's most expensive visa. The [Visa Integrity Fee](#) alone could cost 1 million visits and \$3 billion in spending annually if implemented. Cost is already travelers' top concern about choosing the U.S.
- **Proposed social media screening mandate:** A [proposal](#) would require some travelers to submit five years of social media history to visit the U.S. If implemented, it could deter one-third of international travelers and eliminate \$15.7 billion in spending.
- **Threatened removal of CBP officers at some international airports:** Pulling CBP officers from international airports puts nearly \$70 billion in visitor spending at risk across 18 gateway airports and disrupts the return of the 40 million Americans they process each year.
- **Reoccurring government shutdowns keep travel hostage during every political fight:** Short-term funding solutions for paying TSA officers and air traffic controllers give Congress the excuse to disrupt travel. During the last shutdown, more than 1,100 TSA officers quit after being expected to work without pay. The next disruption looms, with funding expiring September 30.

THE ASKS

- **Remove barriers to traveling to the U.S.:** The United States cannot compete for global travelers while telling them they are not welcome. The \$250 visa integrity fee and a requirement to submit five years of social media history do exactly that. CBP officers should focus on processing Americans returning home and welcoming international visitors. They should not be used as political pawns. Security and welcome are not in conflict.

- **Restore Brand USA funding:** America just had its moment in the global spotlight during the World Cup. That goodwill has a shelf life. The bipartisan VISIT USA Act moves \$160 million in surplus Travel Promotion Funds to market the American travel experience to the world and keep our welcome front and center.
- **Modernize airport checkpoints:** Reinvest the fees travelers already pay into the air travel experience. Every year, \$1.5 billion from the Passenger Security Fee is diverted elsewhere instead of funding upgrades like biometric screening. [89% of Americans](#) say that money should go back into modern security technology. 81% specifically support biometric screening for faster, more secure TSA checkpoints.
- **Keep TSA officers and air traffic controllers paid during shutdowns:** It is unconscionable to keep forcing essential aviation workers to show up to work without a paycheck. Congress needs a permanent solution so TSA officer and air traffic controller pay never depends on an unrelated funding fight.