

NOVEMBER 2023 | QUICK MESSAGING GUIDE

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

- Lawmakers must set an aggressive schedule to complete FY24 appropriations bills and maintain funding to keep the federal government open before the Nov. 17 deadline, as well as reauthorize the FAA before its end-of-year expiration.
 - U.S. Travel estimates a government shutdown would cost the travel economy **\$140 million per day or nearly \$1 billion a week.**
- U.S. Travel welcomed newly elected U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson and shared the industry's desire to work with him on travel-related issues.

AIR TRAVEL SYSTEM

- The bipartisan Senate confirmation of Mike Whitaker as FAA administrator is a major step forward in alleviating strain on the current system, meeting increasing air traveler demand and building an improved air travel experience for the future.
- Growing demand for air travel is challenged by an **underfunded and understaffed** air traffic control system, leading to delays and frustrations for travelers.
- Air travel is not going to get better without **significant and sustained** investments in the FAA.
- The private sector is doing what it can to address challenges; it is Congress and the federal government that are failing the traveler.
 - While U.S. airlines have hired more than **55,000 new workers** since 2022 to help stave off delays, there are 1,200 fewer air traffic controllers than a decade ago.

TRAVEL DEMAND/PERFORMANCE

- There's an economic cost of not addressing traveler pain points. The government's inattention in solving travel challenges is leaving demand on the table.
 - On average, air travelers are **avoiding two trips** in the next year due to air travel hassles. *(Ipsos)*
 - This equates to 27 million trips avoided and \$71 billion in losses for the U.S. economy over the next year.
- If the government can make improvements to the air travel system, half of air travelers say they will **travel more** in the next six months if the experience improves. *(Ipsos)*
 - Business travelers would take an average of **two more business trips per year** if the air travel experience improved, resulting in a gain of \$52 billion in economic impact. *(Ipsos)*
- U.S. Travel's forecast shows travel performance overall is **normalizing**:
 - Domestic leisure travel is expected to remain strong, but with normalized rates of growth (around 2%) in 2023 and 2024.
- Business travel is **increasing**, with both volume and spending at **double-digit growth** in 2023 before leveling off in future years.
- International visitation growth is **strong**: Year-over-year, inbound travel volume is projected to grow 31% in 2023.

INTERNATIONAL INBOUND

- America should more aggressively compete for global travelers. Our share is slipping (from 5.4% in 2019 to 5.3% today) while notable countries with whom we compete see greater levels of increases in visitations.
- It is critical that the federal government address barriers to inbound travel growth, including excessive visa wait times that average over 400 days in our top markets and appropriately staffing ports of entry with CBP officials.

GOVERNMENTAL TRAVEL FAILURES

- The U.S. government is failing the traveler—and it's hurting our country's global competitiveness.
 - Nations around the world—like Canada and the UK—are taking steps to ease entry for global travelers.
- The United States is the **top aspirational travel destination** for global travelers, but year-long waits (over 400 days, on average) for a U.S. visitor visa from our top 10 inbound markets is a **barrier** to welcoming millions of visitors.
 - Visitors coming from a country where a visa is required accounted for 43% of inbound travel to the U.S. in 2019.
- International visitors at top U.S. airports frequently experience average wait times of **more than an hour**.
 - There are currently **1,700 CBP officers short of demand**; the federal government must ensure that airports and ports of entry are appropriately staffed.
 - Nearly two-thirds of recent air travelers and 66% of business travelers are comfortable sharing their biometric data for a more seamless travel experience. (*psos*)
- The U.S. should commit to **solving issues** that constrain inbound travel, like extraordinary passport and visa wait times and inconsistent waits to clear TSA screening and Customs which create confusion and uncertainty for travelers and could ultimately deter customers in the long run.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Across every sector, the U.S. travel industry is investing in new technology and practices to diversify and conserve our energy resources.
- Through a whole-of-industry approach, the private and public sectors can advance clean energy and energy efficient programs that give travelers greater confidence to **continue traveling** while making sustainable choices.

WORKFORCE

- The travel industry—under increased demand for workers—has more **job openings** than available workers. Leisure & Hospitality has 1.2 million open jobs.
- The **average wage** now in Leisure & Hospitality is over \$21 an hour—well above minimum wage—underscoring that the H-2B (non-immigrant worker) program does not depress wages or take jobs from U.S. workers.
- Congress should ensure final FY24 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security includes a cap exemption for returning H-2B workers, which would significantly expand the number of available H-2B visas.