



April 9, 2003

The Honorable Donald Evans
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Evans:

On behalf of The Travel Industry Association of America and The Travel Business Roundtable, we are writing to highlight our interest in and support for your Department's efforts to implement Congress' recent funding of an international advertising and promotional campaign.

Our industry is gratified that, through its appropriation of \$50 million in the FY03 Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, Congress has lent its support to our long-held belief that a federally coordinated campaign to promote the U.S. as a destination is important to our national interest. Travel and tourism represents the leading edge of the service sector that defines our nation's economy. The significant post-September 11th downturn in almost every segment of this diverse industry is well known. Ongoing homeland security concerns, the war with Iraq, corollary international friction, and remaining fears of travel have only exacerbated the downward international visitor spiral, with no immediate end in sight.

International visitors represent the most lucrative portion of the American travel market, spending more money and traveling longer than their domestic counterparts. This continuing deterioration threatens travel and tourism employers and employees and further erodes a critical revenue source for an ever growing number of local and state governments for whom travel and tourism dollars provide funding for essential services.

The recent creation of the Office of Global Communications at the White House is a noteworthy development. Charged with the responsibility of telling America's story overseas, the Office will seek to influence the attitudes of foreign audiences toward our country. The separate tourism initiative to implement a successful destination marketing campaign can only complement the White House outreach effort. Indeed, our organizations believe that the promotion of inbound travel will play a critical role in shaping a more favorable international view of our great country.

Recognizing that international events will necessarily shape this marketing campaign, we respectfully submit the following recommendations as guideposts for this evolving program:

- The Travel and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board, enumerated by the Consolidated Resolution, should be convened as quickly as possible, should be relatively small in number, and should consist of executive level appointees representative of the travel and tourism industry. Industry leaders would in turn bring to the table the finest talent within their respective organizations.
- The funds should be targeted to a few select international markets and, ideally, be expended over the next two years. The current list of nations with the greatest number of inbound arrivals offer an excellent starting point for this initiative.

- These federal funds should be expended with the goal of ensuring the highest possible return on investment. To accomplish this, administrative costs should be minimal; the private sector stands ready to assist you with this goal. Any campaign should be measurable and should demonstrate that the money was well spent and delivered a tangible return to the U.S. economy and its taxpayers.
- The marketing campaign should appropriately utilize a national brand to maximize industry participation. Many domestic travel interests will wish to leverage this federal investment through co-branded campaigns where possible.
- The Tourism Promotion Advisory Board should critically evaluate the recommendations of private, public and non-profit sector interests who could assist your Department in developing the most effective marketing campaign possible. Many appealing programs may already exist that would offer useful direction in this regard. For example, the SeeAmerica program, launched three years ago, has to date laid a foundation of 400 industry organizations with a wide range of co-branded programs in 21 countries. The Board should critically evaluate this and all other innovative proposals as it prepares recommendations for your consideration.
- Lastly, we believe that the nation's needs would be best served if the great majority of these funds were put toward a comprehensive, multimedia international initiative. We see merit in designating a smaller portion of the funds to support a program that allows local, state and regional interests to apply for financial assistance to their own targeted international marketing campaigns. These initiatives should in turn tie into the larger campaign and target markets in order to maximize effectiveness.

On behalf of all segments of the \$537 billion U.S. travel and tourism industry, we thank you for your enthusiastic leadership and support for our industry. Our industry's goals and the national interest are aligned; we stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Sincerely,

John A. Marks
National Chair
Travel Industry Association of America

Jonathan M. Tisch
Chairman
Travel Business Roundtable