

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1947

To authorize the position of Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism, to statutorily establish the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 27, 2021

Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. KING, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To authorize the position of Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism, to statutorily establish the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Visit America Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

6 The purposes of this Act are—

1 (1) to support the travel and tourism industry,
2 which produces economic impacts that are vital our
3 national economy;

4 (2) to address the recent decline in the percent-
5 age of international travelers who visit the United
6 States; and

7 (3) to establish national goals for international
8 visitors to the United States, including—

9 (A) recommendations for achieving such
10 goals and timelines for implementing such rec-
11 ommendations;

12 (B) coordination between Federal and
13 State agencies;

14 (C) the resources needed by each Govern-
15 ment agency to achieve such goals; and

16 (D) national travel export goals.

17 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

18 It is the sense of Congress that—

19 (1) the national goal for international visitors
20 referred to in section 2(3) should reach 116,000,000
21 per year by 2028;

22 (2) the national goal for travel exports referred
23 to in section 2(3)(D) should reach \$445,000,000,000
24 by 2028;

1 (3) the travel industry is an essential part of
2 the United States services exports with respect to
3 both business travel and leisure travel;

4 (4) the promotion of travel and visitation by
5 Brand USA is vital to increasing visitation and ar-
6 ticulating the visitation laws of the United States;
7 and

8 (5) there is an urgent need for a coordinated
9 travel and tourism industry response and strategy in
10 the event of unforeseen circumstances leading to a
11 decline in travel or tourism.

12 **SEC. 4. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM.**

13 Section 2(d) of the Reorganization Plan Numbered
14 3 of 1979 (93 Stat. 1382; 5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

15 (1) by striking “There shall be in the Depart-
16 ment two additional Assistant Secretaries” and in-
17 serting “(1) There shall be in the Department 3 ad-
18 ditional Assistant Secretaries, including the Assist-
19 ant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tour-
20 ism,”; and

21 (2) by adding at the end the following:

22 “(2) The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel
23 and Tourism shall—

24 “(A) be appointed by the President, subject to
25 the advice and consent of the Senate; and

1 “(B) report directly to the Under Secretary for
2 International Trade.”.

3 **SEC. 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY**
4 **OF COMMERCE FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM.**

5 (a) VISITATION GOALS.—The Assistant Secretary of
6 Commerce for Travel and Tourism (referred to in this sec-
7 tion as the “Assistant Secretary”), appointed pursuant to
8 section 2(d) of the Reorganization Plan Numbered 3 of
9 1979, as amended by section 4, shall—

10 (1) establish an annual goal for—

11 (A) the number of international visitors to
12 the United States; and

13 (B) travel exports;

14 (2) develop recommendations for achieving the
15 visitation goals established pursuant to paragraph
16 (1);

17 (3) ensure coordination between—

18 (A) the Department of Commerce, the De-
19 partment of Homeland Security, the Depart-
20 ment of State, the Department of Transpor-
21 tation, the Department of Labor for policy de-
22 velopment and recommendations for utilizing:

23 (i) the National Travel and Tourism
24 Office;

25 (ii) Brand USA;

1 (iii) the United States Travel and
2 Tourism Advisory Board;

3 (iv) the Task Force on Travel and
4 Tourism established by Executive Order
5 13597 of January 19, 2012; and

6 (v) travel industry partners, including
7 public and private destination marketing
8 organizations and travel and tourism sup-
9 pliers;

10 (4) establish short, medium, and long-term
11 timelines for implementing the recommenda-
12 tions developed pursuant to paragraph (2); and

13 (5) conduct Federal agency needs assessments
14 to identify the resources, statutory or regulatory
15 changes, and private sector engagement needed to
16 achieve the annual visitation goals.

17 (b) VISA ADJUDICATION.—The Assistant Secretary,
18 in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Sec-
19 retary of Homeland Security, shall—

20 (1) provide support for improving visitor visa
21 processing with respect to—

22 (A) the maximum time for processing
23 visas, by visitation type;

24 (B) regulatory and policy changes needed
25 to meet the visa processing goals referred to in

1 subparagraph (A), including changes regarding
2 technology, processing centers, and training;
3 and

4 (C) streamlining visa applications and ad-
5 judications, including application design and
6 data collection procedures; and

7 (2) explore opportunities to establish pilot pro-
8 grams to integrate technology into the visitor visa
9 adjudication process, including video conferencing
10 and biometrics.

11 (c) DOMESTIC TRAVEL.—The Assistant Secretary
12 shall—

13 (1) conduct a study to better understand do-
14 mestic policy options for supporting competitiveness
15 with respect to the strengths, weaknesses, and
16 growth of the domestic travel industry;

17 (2) develop recommendations and goals to sup-
18 port domestic tourism, separated by business and
19 leisure; and

20 (3) engage public and private stakeholders to
21 support domestic tourism.

22 (d) WORKFORCE.—The Assistant Secretary—

23 (1) in coordination with the Secretary of Labor,
24 shall provide timely and reliable workforce data re-
25 garding workforce and labor market needs;

1 (2) shall work to improve tourism industry data
2 collection by the Bureau of Economic Analysis; and

3 (3) shall provide recommendations for policy en-
4 hancements and streamlining.

5 (e) TRAVEL EXPORT PROMOTION.—The Assistant
6 Secretary, in coordination with the Director General of the
7 United States and Foreign Commercial Service, shall work
8 to promote and facilitate travel exports abroad and ensure
9 competitiveness by—

10 (1) participating in and organizing meetings,
11 incentives, conferences, and exhibitions;

12 (2) emphasizing rural and other destinations
13 rich in cultural heritage or ecological tourism,
14 among other uniquely American destinations; and

15 (3) promoting sports and recreation events and
16 activities.

17 (f) TRAVEL SECURITY.—The Assistant Secretary
18 shall investigate and provide recommendations regarding
19 utilizing and expanding existing security programs to bet-
20 ter meet the needs of the United States travel and tourism
21 industry, including—

22 (1) the Visa Waiver Program authorized under
23 section 217 of the Immigration and Nationality Act
24 (8 U.S.C. 1187);

25 (2) preclearance operations;

1 (3) the Trusted Traveler Program;

2 (4) the biometric entry-exit control system re-
3 quired under section 110 of the Illegal Immigration
4 Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996
5 (division C of Public Law 104–208; 8 U.S.C. 1221
6 note); and

7 (5) the establishment of a system to provide in-
8 creased resilience to travel during pandemics.

9 (g) RECOVERY STRATEGY.—

10 (1) INITIAL RECOVERY STRATEGY.—Not later
11 than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this
12 Act, the Assistant Secretary, in consultation with
13 the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory
14 Board and travel industry partners, shall develop
15 and implement a COVID–19 pandemic recovery
16 strategy to assist in the United States travel and
17 tourism industry to quickly recover from the travel
18 restrictions necessitated by the pandemic.

19 (2) FUTURE RECOVERY STRATEGIES.—After
20 assisting in the implementation of the strategy de-
21 veloped pursuant to paragraph (1), the Assistant
22 Secretary, in consultation with the entities referred
23 to in such paragraph, shall develop additional recov-
24 ery strategies for the travel and tourism industry in
25 anticipation of other unforeseen catastrophic events

1 that would significantly affect the travel and tourism
2 industry, such as hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, tor-
3 nadoes, or pandemics.

4 (h) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

5 (1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The Assistant
6 Secretary shall produce an annual forecasting report
7 on the travel and tourism industry, which shall in-
8 clude current and anticipated—

9 (A) domestic employment needs;

10 (B) international inbound volume and
11 spending, taking into account the lasting effects
12 of the COVID–19 pandemic and the impact of
13 the recovery strategy implemented pursuant to
14 subsection (g)(1); and

15 (C) domestic volume and spending, includ-
16 ing Federal and State public land travel and
17 tourism data.

18 (2) BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS.—The Di-
19 rector of the Bureau of Economic Analysis should
20 update the Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts
21 quarterly, including—

22 (A) State level travel and tourism export
23 data;

24 (B) travel and tourism workforce data for
25 full-time and part-time employment; and

1 (C) Federal and State public lands visita-
2 tion and spending data.

3 (3) NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM OF-
4 FICE.—The Director of the National Travel and
5 Tourism Office shall—

6 (A) report international arrival and spend-
7 ing data on a regular monthly schedule; and

8 (B) shall include questions in the Survey
9 of International Air Travelers regarding wait-
10 times, visits to public lands, and State data, to
11 the extent applicable.

12 **SEC. 6. TRAVEL AND TOURISM STRATEGY.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce, in
14 consultation with the United States Travel and Tourism
15 Advisory Board, shall develop and submit to Congress a
16 10-year travel and tourism strategy, which shall include—

17 (1) the establishment of goals with respect to
18 the number of annual international visitors to the
19 United States and the annual amount of travel ex-
20 ports during such 10-year period;

21 (2) the resources needed to achieve the goals es-
22 tablished pursuant to paragraph (1); and

23 (3) recommendations for statutory or regulatory
24 changes that would be necessary to achieve such
25 goals.

1 (b) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—The Secretary
 2 of Commerce shall coordinate an interagency strategy with
 3 the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Se-
 4 curity for—

5 (1) identify impediments to reaching the goals
 6 referred to in subsection (a)(1); and

7 (2) recommends solutions for overcoming such
 8 impediments.

9 **SEC. 7. UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY**
 10 **BOARD.**

11 Section 3 of the Act entitled “An Act to encourage
 12 travel in the United States, and for other purposes” (15
 13 U.S.C. 1546) is amended—

14 (1) by amending the section heading to read as
 15 follows: “**UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM**
 16 **ADVISORY BOARD; ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR**
 17 **PROMOTION OF TOURIST TRAVEL**”; and

18 (2) by striking “The Secretary of Commerce is
 19 authorized” and inserting the following:

20 “(a) UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVI-
 21 SORY BOARD.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—There is established the
 23 United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board
 24 (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Board’), which
 25 shall be composed of not more than 32 members,

1 who shall be appointed by the Secretary of Com-
2 merce for 2-year terms from among companies and
3 organizations in the travel and tourism industry.

4 “(2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The Assistant
5 Secretary for Travel and Tourism shall serve as the
6 Executive Director of the Board.

7 “(3) EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT.—The National
8 Travel and Tourism Office of the International
9 Trade Administration shall serve as the Executive
10 Secretariat for the Board.

11 “(4) FUNCTIONS.—The Board shall comply
12 with its Charter, including—

13 “(A) serving as the advisory body to the
14 Secretary of Commerce on matters relating to
15 the travel and tourism industry in the United
16 States;

17 “(B) advising the Secretary of Commerce
18 on government policies and programs that af-
19 fect the United States travel and tourism indus-
20 try;

21 “(C) offering counsel on current and
22 emerging issues;

23 “(D) providing a forum for discussing and
24 proposing solutions to problems related to the
25 travel and tourism industry; and

1 “(E) examining the domestic travel and
2 tourism industry as an economic engine.

3 “(5) RECOVERY STRATEGY.—The Board shall
4 assist the Assistant Secretary in the development
5 and implementation of the COVID–19 pandemic re-
6 covery strategy required under section 5(g)(1) of the
7 Visit America Act.

8 “(b) ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PROMOTION OF
9 TOURIST TRAVEL.—The Secretary of Commerce is au-
10 thorized”.

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