

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

September 29, 2015

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
419 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dean Heller
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Lee
United States Senate
361A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Schumer, Heller, Klobuchar and Lee:

We are writing to thank you for re-introducing the Jobs Originated through Launching Travel (“JOLT”) Act to boost the economy, strengthen national security and enhance public diplomacy. With your leadership, the Senate passed the JOLT Act last session and, with momentum for identical House legislation, we are writing today to offer our enthusiastic assistance to help enact it into law.

Travel is already the nation’s top service export, generating a million American jobs and two-thirds of international visitors arrive in the United States through the VWP. Your legislation would further sharpen America’s security and competitiveness in the booming global market for business and leisure travel.

The revised JOLT Act would tighten VWP security while laying groundwork for its expansion. It updates the criteria for VWP status by assessing both overstays and visa refusals of applicant countries and reinstating limited authority to waive the refusal rate threshold. The bill mandates fresh evaluation of the Electronic System Travel Authorization (ESTA) to improve the efficiency and accuracy of international traveler vetting, and codifies several security provisions that are currently discretionary to ensure that VWP partner countries adhere to strict safety protocols. These strengthened precautions cover airport security, air marshal programs and sharing of counter-terrorism information.

To reflect this strong emphasis on homeland protection, the bill would also rename VWP as the Secure Travel Partnership program. Because passport security is so critical to border safety, the JOLT Act

requires biometric or e-passports, closing a loophole that allowed citizens of the 27 nations admitted to the VWP before 2008 to enter the United States using non-electronic passports.

The legislation would further increase international travel to the United States by authorizing a pilot program to test the use of secure videoconference technology for visa interviews in large countries where our consulates are far apart; expanding the Global Entry Program that allows pre-approved, low-risk international visitors access to expedited customs clearance; and codifying processing targets to further reduce visa application wait times. To encourage our Canadian neighbors who regularly visit or reside part-time in the United States, the bill would ease travel restrictions for retirees.

Taken together, these provisions would send a powerful worldwide message that the United States is serious about security and welcomes legitimate international visitors whose spending benefits destinations across the United States. To enhance both national and economic security, we commend your leadership and look forward to working together to enact the JOLT Act this session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger J. Dow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Roger J. Dow
President and CEO
U.S. Travel Association