



2017 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 115TH CONGRESS

Legislative Priorities and Endorsements

Visit San Antonio (VSA) will continue to actively support its travel and tourism partners, including the U.S. Travel Association (USTA), Destination Marketing Associates International (DMAI) and Meetings Mean Business (MMB) and their legislative agendas that support the mission and vision of VSA. Specifically, Visit San Antonio's Advocacy priorities are:

- ◆ Airport Modernization and the updating of the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC)
- ◆ Visa Waiver Program (VWP)
- ◆ Trusted Traveler Programs

Airport Modernization/ Passenger Facility Charge

The U.S. Aviation system is outdated, insufficient and curbing the demand for air travel. The American Society of Civil Engineers rated airport infrastructure a D+ and not one U.S. airport ranks among the world's top 25.

The U.S. air traffic control system uses WWII-era radar technology that causes systemic flight delays, wastes fuel and increases airline costs.

In 2014, one-in-four flights in the U.S. were delayed or cancelled. In 2013, Americans avoided 38 million trips because of flying hassles, dealing a \$35.7 billion blow to the U.S. economy. A recent survey found that American flyers are the unhappiest in the world.

In the next decade, **air travel is projected to grow** from 756 million enplanements (total number of passengers boarding an aircraft) per year **to almost 927 million**, which could add \$243 billion in annual travel spending and support 850,000 new American jobs.

The Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) was approved by Congress in 1991 with a \$3 cap and was raised again in the year 2000 to \$4.50. However, adjusted to inflation, the value today is less than \$2.85.

Visit San Antonio encourages Congress to raise the PFC to \$8.50 and index it for inflation to ensure the purchasing power is not compromised.

Visa Waiver Program (VWP)

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) allows citizens from 38 participating countries to travel to the United States for business or leisure trips for up to 90 days without first obtaining a "tourist" (B-1/B-2) visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

The VWP is an important tool for increasing security standards, advancing information sharing, strengthening international partnerships and promoting legitimate trade and travel to the United States.



In 2015, **more than 23 million visitors to the United States**, 60 percent of all overseas visitors—i.e., international visitors other than those from our next-door neighbors Canada and Mexico—arrived through the VWP.

While visiting the United States, they **generated \$190 billion in economic output** for the U.S. economy and supported nearly one million jobs. **These tax revenues support public schools and fire departments.**

Largely as a result of the VWP, **travel is our nation's number one services export**, generating a trade surplus of \$98 billion in 2015.

Each individual is vetted for security against multiple law enforcement and security databases (including terrorist screening databases) before boarding a plane, and must obtain preauthorization from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in order to travel to the United States.

The VWP requires stringent security standards, facilitates actionable information-sharing with participating countries and enhances our ability to identify potential threats.

Recent data released by DHS found that **less than one percent (0.65%) of travelers from VWP countries overstay their expected departure**, lower than the overstay rate of visitors from non-VWP countries (1.6%).

The VWP has been modernized considerably since 2001 and continues to adapt in the face of changing threats.

The Visa Waiver Program should continuously be evaluated and evolved to reflect the ever-changing security landscape. The 2015 omnibus funding package included sensible security enhancements that will be implemented this year.

Provisions such as better information-sharing among intelligence and law enforcement agencies, screening of all travelers against INTERPOL databases and increased use of fraud-resistant e-passports that contain biometric information will make our nation safer while keeping America's doors open to international visitors.

Trusted Traveler Programs

"Trusted Traveler" programs permit TSA to provide expedited screening to low-risk travelers departing from the United States and focus attention on high-risk and unknown passengers at security checkpoints.

Security and efficiency are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are equally important and equally achievable objectives.



PreCheck is an established program that is available at more than 150 airports with 12 participating airlines. It is also available to members of the military at more than 100 airports. More than 9 million individuals are registered with various trusted traveler programs.

The TSA PreCheck program provides better efficiency in the security screening process that allows trusted travelers to be directed to expedited screening lines.

Trusted Travelers are allowed to: leave shoes, belts and light outerwear on, keep their laptop in its case, keep small containers (3.4 oz. or less) of liquids and gels in a carry-on, have children aged 12 years and under go with the TSA PreCheck passenger in the expedited screening line, and use a magnetometer for screening vs. the full body scanners.

Visit San Antonio supports:

Increasing resources to market TSA PreCheck and Global Entry would help enroll a larger segment of air traveler, effectively shrinking the pool of unknown travelers. The more travelers enrolled, the shorter wait times will be at airport security and the safer travelers will be as a whole.

TSA should analyze and develop a process for spontaneous enrollment. Too often, the current requirement for two forms of identification is a significant barrier to travelers enrolling in the program and a modification to only one document would enable TSA to better reach its stated goal of 25 million enrollees.

Simplifying the two-step online and in-person enrollment process by working with the private sector to collect biometric information via kiosks or mobile platforms would increase application accessibility and effectively motivate millions to enroll in TSA PreCheck.

Congress and the CBP should significantly expand the successful Global Entry and Preclearance programs that expedite screening for pre-approved, low-risk international travelers. By removing known, low-risk travelers from the regular screening process, expanding these programs enables CBP to focus resources on potentially riskier unknown travelers.