

# Encouraging Tourists to Return to the United States

Tourism Advisory Board Develops Long-term Plan

by Ginny Ward

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U.S. Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans recently announced the creation of the United States Travel and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board, which met for the first time on Ellis Island, N.Y., on September 8, 2003. The board will advise Secretary Evans on how best to expand the number of international visitors

ism go far toward strengthening and enhancing our relationships with our friends and allies around the world," said Evans. "With the talented and visionary U.S. travel and tourism industry experts represented on this board, I am confident we will meet our goal of attracting more visitors to the United States."

The advisory board will design a campaign that will include market and evaluation research, consumer and

Kingdom, Japan, and Germany are the five countries on which the Bush administration will focus its international tourism promotional campaign efforts.

These five markets were chosen because these countries have historically sent the most travelers to the United States. They represent 75 percent of the international travelers hosted in the United States in 2002 and 46 percent of the receipts generated in 2001. In addition, these five countries contributed more than \$9 billion to the travel trade surplus.



to the United States and ensure that spending by international visitors continues to increase.

"President Bush is committed to reviving international travel to the United States, because of the number of Americans who rely on this industry for jobs and because travel and tour-

trade advertising, and promotional efforts focused on earned and unearned media. There also will be a matching grants program to support regional promotion efforts.

During the first meeting of the board, Secretary Evans announced that Canada, Mexico, the United

"The travel and tourism industry greatly suffered economically from the 9/11 terrorist attacks," Evans said. "On the eve of the second anniversary of 9/11, we want to send a global message that America is a safe place to visit and that we live in a vast and wonderful country with a diverse population and a proud history. As the campaign gets under way, I look forward to seeing an increase in visitors from these key markets and other countries."

The advisory board is comprised of 15 travel and tourism industry executives from across the United States. Nearly 130 candidates applied to be members of the board through a competitive process after a *Federal Register* notice was published. The selected members



Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Commerce.

Secretary Evans (center) and the members of the Travel and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board gather in New York for the first meeting on September 8, 2003.

represent a bipartisan cross-section of the industry.

“We’ve come a long way since September 11, but much still needs to be done,” Evans continued. “This industry is a key economic generator, so it is important that we continue to be aggressive in restoring international travel to the United States.”

The U.S. travel and tourism industry is responsible for approximately 17 million direct and indirect travel-related jobs in the United States, and it is the fourth-largest export of the U.S. economy. In 2002, travel and tourism to the United States generated \$84 billion in exports.

**Q. How was the U.S. Travel and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board created?**

**A.** On February 20, 2003, President Bush signed the Omnibus Appropriation Act, which appropriated \$50 million for an international advertising and promotional campaign to encourage individuals to travel to the United States. The secretary of commerce

appointed the advisory board, which will recommend appropriate coordinated activities for funding.

**Q. Why is the focus of the promotional campaign just on key markets?**

**A.** The campaign will focus on countries that have historically sent the most travelers to the United States. We believe it is imperative to focus on just a few markets in order to maximize the limited funds.

**Q. How long will the campaign last?**

**A.** Congress intended for the funds to be a one-time appropriation. We hope to be able to make the campaign last 12 months and will work with the advisory board to increase these funds through partnerships and matching grants.

**Q. What are the new passport requirements for international travelers to the United States?**

**A.** All Visa Waiver Program travelers will be required to present a valid

machine-readable passport for visa-free entry into the United States. The new requirement takes effect on October 26, 2004. This is acceleration by three years of the official requirements for this segment of travelers.

**Q. What are the Transit Without Visa (TWOV) and International-to-International (ITI) programs and why have they been suspended?**

**A.** As steps to make air travel even safer, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of State suspended these programs on August 2, 2003. The two programs allowed certain international air passengers to travel through the United States for transit purposes without first obtaining visas. Both agencies intend to reinstate the TWOV and ITI programs as soon as additional security measures can be implemented to safeguard the programs. ■