

**U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Testimony on Department of Homeland Security Travel Initiatives
Douglas A. Smith, Assistant Secretary for the Private Sector, DHS**

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Introduction

Chairman Landrieu, Vice Chairman Lautenberg, Senator Coats, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) current major travel initiatives.

My name is Douglas Smith, and I am the Assistant Secretary for the Private Sector at DHS. I am the primary advisor to the Secretary on how DHS impacts the private sector, opportunities for public private partnership, and how DHS impacts the economy.

In my capacity as the Assistant Secretary for the Private Sector, I have served as the Department's representative on interagency working groups on travel and tourism, such as the Tourism Policy Council and the recently established Task Force on Travel and Competitiveness. Additionally, I am the DHS ex-officio member of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB), which advises the U.S. Government on policies and programs that affect the travel and tourism industry. I also serve on the President's Export Council on travel and tourism issues

Given the President's recent Executive Order 13597, "Establishing Visa and Foreign Visitor Processing Goals and the Task Force on Travel and Competitiveness," and the growth of a number of DHS travel and tourism-related programs and initiatives, today's hearing is especially timely.

The Department's Efforts on Travel and Tourism

At the onset, I want to stress DHS's commitment to the President's critically important initiative. There is no better area in which to showcase our dual goal of economic and national security than our work to foster and facilitate travel to and within the United States. My testimony will provide a brief overview of DHS support of the larger U.S. government effort to foster and facilitate a thriving travel and tourism industry, the engagement my office has had with our private sector partners, and the steps DHS is taking to improve the traveler experience.

Every year tens of millions of tourists from all over the world travel to see firsthand this great country. DHS plays a primary role in the facilitation of what amounted to a 134 billion dollar industry in 2010. We secure passengers and their luggage before they board planes, we screen travelers as they enter our borders, and we play an important role in the visa process, among many other responsibilities. This is why Secretary Napolitano has made the facilitation and

security of travel and tourism a priority for the Department. We are taking concrete steps at the President's direction, and are working closely with Congress and the Office of Management and Budget, to boost America's tourism industry so that we can grow our economy and create more jobs while continuing to secure our country. At DHS we believe the goals of economic prosperity and national security are fundamentally intertwined.

At the interagency level, Federal Government collaboration to foster travel and tourism has never been stronger. President Obama's Executive Order on January 19, 2012, has resulted in a coordinated interagency effort to streamline the visa issuance process, strengthen the Visa Waiver Program and trusted traveler programs, provide useful and accessible travel information online, and develop our country's first National Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Strategy. Through the interagency leadership of Secretary of Commerce Bryson and Secretary of the Interior Salazar, DHS works every day toward these commitments.

I am also proud to say DHS is continuously striving to meaningfully incorporate and involve the travel and tourism industry in the policy-making process. Some of the stakeholders we regularly work with include the U.S. Travel Association, Airports Council International, Airlines for America, and – because this is a global effort – the International Air Transport Association (IATA). As Secretary Napolitano's representative to the TTAB, I work to ensure DHS has a formal, structured working relationship with the travel industry, engaging businesses on issues that matter most to industry. When the TTAB submits recommendations on behalf of industry, we not only share those perspectives with the appropriate program managers and leadership within DHS, but we also work with industry to leverage their expertise and partnership in identifying solutions to their recommendations. We have worked with businesses to share their best practices on customer service and queue management, promote DHS programs and initiatives, and we have even encouraged our ports of entry to engage and work directly with their industry stakeholders. Through our work with the TTAB and others, the travel and tourism industry is fully engaged in operations and policies that impact them. Agency-wide DHS is responsive to their needs and concerns. We are focused on making America as safe and as easy as possible to visit, and we view industry as a resource and a critical partner in this effort.

The Traveler Experience

The Department is working at each step of the travel experience to increase the number of legitimate travelers to the United States and facilitate their journey and entry in a safe and efficient way. I will describe examples pre-arrival, on arrival, and while traveling within the United States.

As potential tourists are making their travel plans, DHS is a part of the effort to promote the United States as the destination of choice. In Fiscal Year 2011, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) managed the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) fee which collected over \$116 million for the Corporation for Travel Promotion. ESTA fees are paid by travelers seeking to enter the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. The Corporation, established by the 2010 Travel Promotion Act, is a public-private organization charged with promoting travel to the United States. The CBP ESTA Program is expected to collect the same amount, if not more, this Fiscal Year. My colleagues at CBP and I are closely engaged in that effort as the Corporation

for Travel Promotion implements its global marketing strategy “BrandUSA.” In addition, as directed by the President’s Executive Order, the interagency Task Force on Travel and Competitiveness, is developing a National Travel and Tourism Strategy to promote domestic and international travel opportunities to and throughout the United States.

After foreign tourists decide to travel to the United States, many must apply for a visa. DHS is currently collaborating with the Department of State (DoS) to strengthen visa processing, and facilitate legitimate travel and tourism. Under a new pilot, in select circumstances, qualified foreign visitors who were interviewed and thoroughly screened in conjunction with a prior visa application may be able to renew their visas without undergoing another interview. All applicants will still undergo thorough screening against inter-agency databases. However, this initiative will free resources to interview more first-time applicants. The resulting reduced visa application wait times are expected to encourage travel and tourism to the United States, especially among travelers from emerging markets. DHS is committed to supporting DoS in its goal to increase by 40% nonimmigrant visa processing capacity in China and Brazil specifically.

When visitors arrive at our borders, CBP is improving the arrivals experience to make it more welcoming. Working with some of the most recognized brands in the tourism industry, CBP has improved passenger service training for our frontline officers, streamlined signage at our ports of entry, and implemented programs to speed passenger traffic through Federal Inspection Services areas.

In addition to our internal efforts to make the ports of entry more welcoming, DHS recognizes that each port is unique in its facilities and the airlines, passengers, and local industry that it serves. For this reason, we have emphasized the importance of local external collaboration at each port of entry, where local companies, the airport authority, and DHS entities can engage in dialogue and work together to improve the port at the field level. Our first effort launched in Orlando, where DHS and the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority worked with the local travel and tourism industry to improve the signage and port facilities. Out of this partnership, DHS was also able to accommodate a new daily flight from Brazil to Orlando. This flight currently brings more than 200 tourists to Orlando every day. Local industry estimates this flight will have a \$100 million annual economic impact. More achievements like this will be accomplished through collaboration at the local level, when airport, industry, and DHS entities are able to meet shared challenges and opportunities together.

A cornerstone of the Department’s efforts to provide a more efficient and welcoming experience for travelers entering the country is Global Entry. This program facilitates expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers through the use of automated kiosks. CBP now has surpassed 940,600 eligible users enrolled in the Global Entry Program with over 4,000 daily uses. Travelers have used automated Global Entry kiosks in more than two million transactions at 22 airports, freeing more than 42,400 inspection hours that DHS has re-allocated to focus on the regular passenger queues. The result is reduced wait times for all passengers. Global Entry will soon expand to additional airports, serving approximately 97 percent of international travelers, and now allows children under 14 to participate for the first time. Global Entry also benefits from our engagement with business. Working with credit card companies, hotel

companies, and airlines to promote the program to their most loyal customers has resulted in significantly increased enrollment volumes.

Within the United States, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has implemented a new passenger pre-screening pilot “TSA Pre✓™” to facilitate expedited checkpoint screening at select domestic airports. TSA Pre✓™ is open to any U.S. citizen who is a member of one of CBP’s trusted traveler programs, such as Global Entry, SENTRI, or NEXUS at participating airports and airlines. While this program is currently only available to U.S. citizens on domestic flights, TSA Pre✓™ allows TSA to better allocate limited resources and focus on higher-risk passengers, further streamlining the travel experience.

The examples above illustrate how DHS is working to foster and facilitate a thriving travel and tourism industry, while maintaining the highest security standards, across the entire tourism experience – from pre-trip planning, to domestic travel. DHS continues to welcome the input and engagement of private sector and Congressional stakeholders, as well as the traveling public to pursue our mission in an increasingly innovative, efficient, and effective way.

Conclusion

Chairman Landrieu, Vice Chairman Lautenberg, Senator Coats, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security. DHS is committed to the whole-of-government effort to support a thriving travel and tourism industry so significant to our economy while maintaining the highest standards of security. I thank the Subcommittee for its support of the Department’s efforts.