



## U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS TRAVEL AND TOURISM TASK FORCE

### TEN-POINT ACTION PLAN

Over the past year, the United States travel and tourism industry has faced significant challenges on several fronts, especially the decline of international visitors. Due to the national recession and September 11, the travel slowdown has severely pinched many airlines, hotels, restaurants, small businesses, and city budgets, which all rely on tourism for a significant portion of their revenues. All of this is taking place at a time when other foreign governments are taking the lead in promoting their countries as destination of choice.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of travel and tourism industry workers have been laid off or had their hours reduced, travel and tourism companies faced steep revenue shortfalls, and state and local governments saw a rapid decline in tax revenue.

Led by Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, who chairs the U.S. Conference of Mayors Travel and Tourism Task Force, the U. S. Conference of Mayors, the Travel Business Roundtable, and the International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus have joined together to formulate this ten-point action plan to boost travel and tourism, nationally and internationally, and address the importance this industry has on U.S. metropolitan economies.

1. **Advocate the Establishment of a Presidential Advisory Council on Travel and Tourism:** Call on the Bush Administration to create this Council of industry leaders, federal and local government officials and non-profit organizations, to advise the President on national tourism policy and ensure that travel and tourism receives a more sustained and vigorous focus at the federal level.
2. **Urge Congress to Create a Destination Marketing Pilot Program:** Congress must provide funding to specific cities and states to undertake individual international destination marketing initiatives and report to Congress with the results. This pilot program is a necessary precursor to the funding of a larger

destination-marketing program to promote the United States, predicated upon a public-private partnership.

3. **Urge Congress to Increase Funding for the Market Development Cooperator Program, or Similar Tourism-Specific Program:** Congress must increase funding for this \$2 million Commerce Department matching grant program that would help cities and convention and visitors bureaus promote their destinations overseas, or establish a similar program that is specifically aimed at travel and tourism ventures.
4. **Urge Congress to Enact the American Travel Promotion Act:** In the next Congress, this legislation must be passed with an amendment to provide \$100 million in matching grants directly to cities to help prove a much-needed stimulus to the U.S. travel and tourism industry as a whole.
5. **Urge Congress to Increase and Restore the Tax Incentives that Spur Business Travel:** Congress must increase the business meal and entertainment tax deduction and restore the spousal tax deduction to provide immediate incentives for businesses to authorize their personnel to travel.
6. **Partner with the Transportation Security Administration and the Industry on “Prepare for Take-Off” Initiative:** This public-private partnership aims to restore American travelers’ confidence in flying. Mayors will work with TSA and the travel and tourism industry to further the goals of this program.
7. **Urge Congress to Make Permanent the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit and to Expand Education and Training Opportunities:** Congress must ensure that travel and tourism businesses continue to have access to these types of tax credits, which are powerful tools to helping unskilled and disadvantaged workers receive job training and secure meaningful employment in the travel and tourism. Mayors will partner with the travel and tourism industry to urge Congress and the Administration to expand educational initiatives focused on preparing the next generation for working in the industry.
8. **Work with the Airline Industry on Travel Issues:** As the debate about airline issues continues to evolve in Washington, the mayors and their business partners will work closely with the US airline industry, the Congress, and the Administration to maximize the competitiveness, accessibility, and affordability of air travel for both domestic and international travelers.
9. **Engage Representatives, Senators, Administration, Business and the Media on Travel and Tourism Policy:** Mayors will engage with their Representatives, Senators, and the White House on travel and tourism policies. Mayors will meet with their Members of Congress, Senators, and Administration officials and business and media representatives while in Washington for the U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting, January 22-24, 2003, to encourage them to adopt

federal policies that stimulate tourism growth. The Travel and Tourism Metro Economies Report will serve as a framework for this discussion.

10. **Request a Meeting with the Administration's Tourism Policy Council:** The Travel and Tourism Task Force will seek a meeting with the interagency Tourism Policy Council (TPC), chaired by Secretary of Commerce Don Evans, to discuss travel and tourism issues and their impact on local economies, and urge federal officials to aggressively look for ways to promote travel to the U.S.

Press contact: Andy Solomon (202) 861-6766