



Center for Responsible Travel

Transforming the Way the World Travels

For Immediate release: April 10, 2017

Press Contacts:

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Tourism Academics & Researchers Warn that U.S. is being hurt by Current Administration's "America First" Rhetoric and Policies

A group of tourism academics and researchers have sent a joint letter (below) to members of the two U.S. Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucuses, highlighting evidence that the current administration's "America First" stance is harming the U.S. economy and undermining our global reputation and 'brand'. These Tourism Caucuses are made up of 88 congressmen and 25 senators. The House Travel & Tourism Caucus is co-chaired by Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Dina Titus (D-NV), and the Senate Caucus is co-chaired by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Roy Blunt (R-MO), and Dean Heller (R-NV). The following letter was mailed to all members of the Caucuses, and emails were sent to staffers of Caucus members working on tourism issues:

Dear Members of the U.S. Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucuses:

As tourism academics and research professionals, we are deeply concerned about the impact of "America First" rhetoric and policies. By claiming to put the interests of our country before all else, this administration's isolationist stance is contrary to the inclusive and democratic values that make America great, not only in the eyes of fellow Americans but around the world. The negative impact to our country economically and in terms of global brand perception is increasingly well-documented.

Given your role with the U.S. Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucuses, we're hoping you will join us for a discussion of our concerns around the following issues:

Economic Impact: International visitors spent \$246 billion in the U.S. in 2016. For a point of comparison, the value of auto exports was \$152 billion, agriculture was \$137 billion and petroleum products were \$97 billion. That progress is now imperiled by the administration's policies. In the week after the first travel ban was ordered, the number of Internet flight searches on international routes bound to the U.S. plummeted by 17 percent, \$185 million in business travel bookings were lost, and international bookings to the U.S. were down 6.5 percent compared with the equivalent period the year before.

Our Nation's Brand: Our country's brand reputation—a measure of global perception—is valued at \$20 trillion—the highest in the world. China, valued at \$7 trillion, ranks second. As Dara Khosrowshahi, the Iranian-born CEO of Expedia explains, "You take Apple and Nike and McDonald's together and multiply it by a thousand. That's the strength of the American dream outside the U.S...."

We don't want to hurt that brand." As international travelers react to a seemingly exclusive and hostile America by taking their wallets and purses elsewhere, we risk undermining international goodwill and eroding the value of our country's global reputation.

American Values: The stigmatization of groups based on religious beliefs, cultural traditions and national origin is not only morally wrong, it's counter-productive and by discouraging visitors, bad for business. As the United Nations World Tourism Organization recently declared: "Global challenges demand global solutions and the security challenges that we face today should not prompt us to build new walls; on the contrary, isolationism and blind discriminatory actions will not lead to increased security but rather to growing tensions and threats."

Impact on Academia: A free exchange of ideas and the contributions of foreign students and scholars to the country's—and the world's—body of knowledge is incalculable. On strictly a financial basis, over one million international students in the U.S. contributed nearly \$36 billion in 2015. It's not only students who are impacted by and reacting passionately to the administration's policies. In solidarity with those affected by the executive order, more than 6,000 academics from around the world have pledged to boycott international academic conferences held in the United States. And on February 2nd, 47 American college and university presidents signed a letter drafted by the presidents of Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania saying that the ban "threatens both American higher education and the defining principles of our country."

Our Country's Future: While we can't be certain of the full range of long-term consequences of the administration's policies on America's visitation numbers and tourism industry, we do know that the bans have already tarnished our image, made visitors feel unwelcome, and fostered calls for travel boycotts to our country. Canada's largest daily newspaper, *The Toronto Star*, published a commentary calling on Canadians to boycott travel to the U.S. And the airline comparison website Cheapflights.co.uk has reported a steady decline in searches for the U.S. since the election. Data compiled by the travel company Kayak reports a 14 per cent decrease in the number of EU citizens searching for flights to the U.S. in January. As Jonathan Grella, the U.S. Travel Association's executive vice president of public affairs, said, "People will be understanding and forgiving when security is your motivation, but if they are left with other takeaways that leave the impression that they're not welcome here, that's obviously a different story."

As tourism industry academics and research professionals, we are all too aware of the ways in which fear-mongering can wreak havoc on a place, its people, and its economy. "America First" and associated policies respond to overemphasized risk with a damaging certainty: the destruction of our nation's global reputation as a welcoming, diverse and tolerant nation. We respectfully implore you to advocate for and safeguard the world's greatest and most diverse travel destination.

We look forward to discussing how we can support the U.S. Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucuses in advocating for policies that protect travel to and within our nation. Kindly let us know your availability for an initial meeting to discuss ongoing collaboration by contacting Seleni Matus at The George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies, selenim@gwu.edu or 202.994.8197 or Dr. Martha Honey, Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), mhoney@responsibletravel.org or 202-347-9203, ext. 413.

Many thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

	Name	Title	Organization/Affiliation
1.	Dr. Hannah Messerli	The Dwight D. Eisenhower Research Professor of Tourism Policy, Chair of the International Institute for Tourism Studies	George Washington University
2.	Dr. Sheryl Elliott	Associate Professor of Marketing and Tourism Studies	George Washington University
3.	Dr. Donald Hawkins	Senior Advisor	Jonathan Tisch Center for Hospitality & Tourism, New York University
4.	Seleni Matus	Executive Director, International Institute of Tourism Studies	George Washington University
5.	Dr. Martha Honey	Co-Founder & Executive Director	Center for Responsible Travel
6.	Dr. Stuart Levy	Associate Professor of Management and Tourism Studies	George Washington University
7.	Jonathan Tourtellot	Founder and CEO	Destination Stewardship Center
8.	Samantha Hogenson	Managing Director	Center for Responsible Travel
9.	Dr. Brian White	Professor and Masters of Arts in Tourism Management Head	Royal Roads University
10.	,	Professor	University of Akron, Ohio
11.	Dr. Scott Curtis	Professor	East Carolina University
12.	Dr. Richard Linowes	Professor	American University, Kogod School of Business
13.	Linnea Iantria	Senior Instructor and Geotourism Coordinator	Missouri State University
14.	Dr. Rodolfo Dirzo	Professor	Stanford University
15.	Dr. Leora Lanz	Professor	Boston University
16.	Robert Billington	Adjunct Professor	Boston University

	Name	Title	Organization/Affiliation
17.	Dr. Marianne Krasny	Professor	Cornell University
18.	Dr. David Cardenas	Associate Professor and Research Associate	University of South Carolina
19.	Dr. Kate Sullivan	Professor, Hospitality Management	San Jose State University
20.	Dr. Jeremy Schultz	Assistant Professor Recreation & Tourism Management	Eastern Washington University
21.	Dan Cormany	Assistant Professor	San Jose State University
22.	Dr. Robert Woods	Professor	University of Nevada, Las Vegas
23.	Anthony Quinn	Assistant Professor	St. John's University
24.	Dr. Robert Robertson	Professor and Coordinator Tourism Planning and Development	Department of Natural Resources and Environment-University of New Hampshire
25.	Dr. Tsu-Hong Yen	Faculty	San Jose State University
26.	Dr. William Ranson	Professor of Earth, Environmental & Sustainability Sciences	Furman University
27.	Dr. David Corsun	Director & Associate Professor	Fritz Knoebel School of Hospitality Management, University of Denver
28.	Yuri Horowitz	Adjunct Faculty	Georgetown University
29.	Dr. Steven Burr	Professor, Recreation Resources Management	Utah State University
30.	Dr. John Nauright	Professor	North Texas University

Note: The listing of the organization and affiliations is for purposes of identification of the named individuals only. It is not an indication that these individuals speak for the organization, nor is it an indication that the views expressed in this letter are those of the organization listed.