

**Testimony of Grant T. Harris**

**Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis  
International Trade Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
before the  
Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade and Export Promotion  
Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee  
United States Senate**

**“Travel and Tourism Recovery and the National Travel and Tourism Strategy”**

**July 12, 2022**

Chair Rosen, Ranking Member Scott, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the National Travel and Tourism Strategy and the state of the U.S. travel and tourism industry. Thank you also for your leadership on travel and tourism.

Developed through the Tourism Policy Council, chaired by Secretary Gina Raimondo, the Strategy brings a whole-of-government focus to increasing American jobs and growing the economy through travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation. The Strategy will support a more robust and sustainable industry moving forward – something that I know is a priority for you and members of this committee and that we share.

I also want to thank my colleagues at the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Transportation, the Interior, Labor, and Agriculture, as well as the National Security Council, Environmental Protection Agency, Small Business Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for their partnership and hard work in developing this Strategy. It is truly an Administration-wide effort. I also want to thank the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board and the many stakeholders who provided valuable recommendations and input that informed this Strategy.

More than two years ago, COVID-19 forced an economic shutdown across the nation and the world that hit travel and tourism particularly hard. The industry is still working to recover.

- In 2019, 79.4 million visitors came to the United States.
- In 2020, that number fell all the way to 19.2 million.

The Administration's robust vaccine rollout and effective travel policies, including the recent decision to drop pre-departure testing, have helped U.S. tourism start to rebound, but we have a lot of work to do to return all segments of tourism in the United States to pre-pandemic levels.

Announced by Secretary Raimondo last month, the Strategy sets an ambitious goal of increasing American jobs by attracting and welcoming 90 million international visitors by 2027, who we estimate will spend \$279 billion annually. This goal matches recommendations from our Travel and Tourism Advisory Board.

The Strategy is centered around four pillars:

- First, promote the United States as a travel destination.
- Second, facilitate travel to and within the United States.
- Third, ensure diverse, inclusive, and accessible travel experiences.
- Fourth, foster resilient and sustainable travel and tourism.

The Strategy recognizes that the recovery in the travel and tourism industry has been uneven. Some regions and market segments, such as business travel, will need more help to bounce back.

Some of the Federal implementation objectives of the Strategy to grow and improve travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation, include the following:

- Showcasing tourism offerings across the United States;
- Helping state, local, and tribal governments identify opportunities to access funding and technical assistance to plan, build, market, and manage sustainable tourism economies;

- Streamlining the entry process (as managed by the Departments of State and Homeland Security);
- Supporting travel and tourism workers' access to child care, reliable transportation, and career pathways, especially for people of color and women;
- And working to build a resilient travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sector and reduce its contributions to the climate crisis.

As we've heard from many companies in the industry, adopting these mitigation measures is also good for their bottom lines.

In advancing these goals, the Administration will work in close partnership with industry; labor organizations; state, local, and tribal governments; and Congress.

In that regard, I want to emphasize our appreciation for the \$250 million emergency funding that Congress made available to Brand USA. This will be a significant help as the travel and tourism industry works to recover.

This new Strategy is only the latest step in the Biden-Harris Administration's work to revitalize the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry.

The Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration has already distributed \$510 million in formula funding to states, territories, and the District of Columbia to support travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and is working to issue \$240 million in competitive grants. As of June 30, EDA has announced \$90.7 million of the competitive funding. The Administration appreciates this direct Congressional support of the industry when it was most needed.

In Nevada, the Nevada Commission on Tourism is using this funding to provide marketing grants across dozens of organizations to boost tourism to rural communities.

In Florida, funds are being used to conduct marketing campaigns, which include international digital marketing to promote online content in foreign countries.

In addition, the International Trade Administration's National Travel and Tourism Office continued to provide vital data and statistics to the industry that inform private sector decision-making and works to enhance the international competitiveness of the U.S. travel and tourism industry.

A sustained, widespread recovery in the travel and tourism industry depends in part on our close work across the Administration and with Congress, to support job creation and foster sustainable growth in communities across the country for years to come.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.