



## Strengthen the Visa Waiver Program



### BACKGROUND

In 1986, Congress passed legislation to create the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) in an effort to facilitate tourism and increase short-term business visits to the United States. The program allows citizens from designated countries to travel to the U.S. for up to 90 days without first obtaining a tourist (B-1/B-2) visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Since its inception, the VWP program has significantly increased international travel

to the U.S., generating billions in economic output and supporting nearly one million jobs annually. Travelers from the 38 participating countries stay an average of 18 nights and spend approximately \$4,400 per person, per trip.

In 2014 alone, more than 20.4 million travelers arrived through the VWP, attributing to \$190 billion in economic output. Consequently, travel is the United States' number one service export.

### NEXT STEPS

Congress recently passed common-sense legislation in the 2015 Omnibus Appropriations Bill aimed to improve security measures for the VWP. AAHOA joined with partners across several sectors to advocate on behalf of this important initiative.

Despite this major accomplishment, legislators must continue to develop proposals to expand the VWP. Ultimately, this effort will allow travelers from closely allied countries to contribute to American small business growth and tourism expansion.

There are currently 9 countries in between "road map and eligibility status" to become partners in the VWP. With the proper infrastructure in place, increasing access to the right countries will create American jobs, encourage local economic growth, and enhance U.S. security through international information sharing.



### ***ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRAVEL IN 2015***

**DIRECT TRAVEL SPENDING:  
OVER \$930 BILLION**

**EMPLOYED OVER 8 MILLION  
AMERICANS**

**GENERATED 2.1 TRILLION  
IN REVENUE AND \$150  
BILLION IN TAX REVENUE**