

CTTC National Leadership

October through December 2009

Program Description

On April 1, 2008, CTTC President and Chief Executive Officer Caroline Beteta began her term as the **National Chair of the U.S. Travel Association**. At the Spring 2009 U.S. Travel Board Meeting, she was unanimously re-appointed as Chair of this prestigious organization for a second year. While other trade organizations are downsizing in the current environment, U.S. Travel is growing.

U.S. Travel is the national, nonprofit organization representing all components of the \$740 billion travel industry, based in Washington, D.C. The mission of U.S. Travel is to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within the United States, while serving as an advocate of the travel industry within the U.S. government. The association's members, consisting of more than 1,800 travel industry peers and colleagues (**primarily consisting of CTTC's assessed business constituency**), annually elect the National Chairperson. The election of Caroline Beteta as National Chair serves as evidence of California's leadership role in the travel industry ranks.

Target Audience

- Travel industry stakeholders and CTTC assessed businesses
- Local, state and federal government officials
- Members of the media and travel trade
- Consumers globally

Objectives & Reach

U.S. Travel represents leaders from nearly all major travel-related companies, state travel and tourism offices, dozens of the top U.S. convention and visitors bureaus, and nearly all of the major travel associations. The organization serves as the leading advocate for increasing travel to and within the United States and provides its members with valuable research, events and marketing.



As California is the number one travel destination in the nation, policy and programming that benefits the U.S. will ultimately benefit the California tourism industry. With CTTC President and CEO Beteta participating as the National Chair of U.S. Travel, California is poised to plan, develop, and implement the policies and programs that help the industry. The National Chair Platform includes four key areas:

- 1) Expanding U.S. Travel's public affairs focus.
- 2) Successfully launching DiscoverAmerica.com, the official travel and tourism Web site of the United States.
- 3) Becoming the champion of travel and the traveler, while continuing to position travel and tourism as an economic engine for local, state and national economies.
- 4) Promote why travel matters.

On December 4, CEO Beteta chaired the U.S. Travel Winter Board meeting, where more than 80 members came together in Dallas. It is clear there is so much more still to do. At the end of this section, you'll find two articles that highlight the procedural challenges the travel industry has faced in gaining passage of the Travel Promotion Act (TPA), and recent comments made by a government leader in the U.K. proposing that frequent fliers be taxed as part of climate change initiatives. It is clear that only by uniting the industry can we continue to amplify our message about why travel matters, and help our industry gain the respect it deserves.

Results & Accomplishments

OBJECTIVE ONE: Expand U.S. Travel's Public Affairs Focus

U.S. Travel is working closely with its Policy Council to establish and carry out an equally aggressive advocacy program for 2009, including:

- Building and communicating the most compelling case possible as to why travel matters to individuals, businesses and policymakers.
- Firmly establishing travel and the travel community as an ally to President Obama on economic and diplomatic issues.
- Implementing policies to increase international inbound travel.
- Expanding U.S. Travel's domestic issue expertise and participation.
- Establishing the travel community as a greater political force in Washington through the launch of a Political Action Committee (PAC) and the creation of a corporate CEO roundtable.

Travel Promotion Act

The TPA has now passed out of the House of Representatives three times in the past 14 months, and is due to pass for the second time out of the Senate in the next few weeks – which will put this critical legislation on the President’s desk in early 2010. While Administrative process has plagued the bill (see article at the end of this section), it appears likely to succeed. This bipartisan bill would create a public-private partnership to promote the U.S. as a travel destination, modeled on the highly successful CTTC program. To assure a fast track to implementation of the program, U.S. Travel leaders have developed a strategic plan, timeline and guidelines to assure this program is up and running in a timely manner.

Chaired by CEO Beteta, the Board tasked U.S. Travel staff at the summer board meeting to develop a “start-up” plan for the Department of Commerce and the soon-to-be created Corporation for Travel Promotion (CTP). Working with a task force that mimics the CTP board as outlined in the TPA, the highlights of a 54-page plan were distributed and may be seen at ustravel.org. In addition to this plan, the task force and board challenged U.S. Travel to develop a detailed proposal to the CTP for leveraging existing U.S. Travel assets, such as the International Pow Wow and DiscoverAmerica.com.

New Advocacy Initiatives

Moving forward nationally, the goal is to create an environment in which:

- Policymakers and opinion leaders better appreciate travel’s value and capabilities.
- Business leaders embrace travel’s bottom line value while viewing it as a core strategic asset.
- Individuals understand travel’s personal, social and community benefits.
- The industry minimizes barriers to travel and promotes travel incentives.

In pursuit of that goal, the industry is being asked to enhance our investments in the following three key areas in 2010 and beyond:

- Develop the case for why travel matters: Advancing the message for why travel matters to policymakers, business leaders and travelers through innovative research, new partnerships, media outreach and public relations.
- Expand grassroots and political action committee (PAC): Amplifying our industry voice by developing a sophisticated and extensive grassroots



network and building the U.S. Travel PAC to become one of the largest PACs in the travel sector.

- Enhance issue expertise and engagement: Ensuring the travel industry has a seat at the policymaking table by creating institutes and formal disciplines related to travel taxes, climate change and emergency preparedness, among other issues.

Building an Industry War Chest

As with any organization, U.S. Travel must generate more revenue to fund the activities our industry needs. The Board plans to find these new dollars through new programs and is pursuing several programs with the potential for high-dollar returns, with the greatest emphasis on the Discover America Travel Program. A separate effort is being undertaken to explore the feasibility of engaging travelers as members of the association.

The Discover America Travel Program is a new initiative in partnership with American Express to leverage promotions from travel companies and unique, once-in-a-lifetime packages created by CVBs to spur travel. Proceeds from these offerings, tentatively set to begin in March, will be used to build an advocacy war chest to further promote the benefits of travel and defend our industry's interests. The traveler engagement concept is in its infancy and, with the executive committee's recent approval, will be explored in months ahead.

OBJECTIVE TWO: Successfully Launch DiscoverAmerica.com

DiscoverAmerica.com was developed through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Commerce, and reaches the top inbound markets to the U.S., which account for about 75% or 37 million international visitors to the U.S. each year. Initially launched in the U.K., Germany, Canada, Mexico and Japan, the site has now expanded to include France, South Korea, Australia, Brazil and China. Launch efforts have now turned to promotion through linking from government sites, i.e., embassies and consulates.

Within two years of launch, DiscoverAmerica.com already has roughly 50-70 percent of the traffic most highly funded NTO sites have, with the exception of the most highly funded NTOs (traffic is about 20 percent of the largest NTO sites). U.S. Travel is spending about 3 to 5 percent of what these organizations are spending. Working with a limited budget, the site has attained over 6 million page views since launch. Significant progress has been made in regard to developing the Travel Specialist Program, which enables travel agents and tour operators to participate in a searchable directory as well as promote special deals and packages. The site now has over 300 travel agents and tour operators participating. Visitors from over 200 countries and over 70 percent



of international visits are attributed to the five leading U.S. inbound markets. In addition, media traffic has increased by 94 percent over last year with only a 30 percent increase in spending. Online media and PR has been targeted to complement these efforts.

U.S. Travel plans to leverage the domestic version of the site for the first-ever industry-wide travel promotion. U.S. Travel staff, the Department of Commerce and the Department of Homeland Security are in discussion regarding the establishment of a prominent link with the ESTA process. This link will drive qualified traffic to the site and complete the overall user experience for those visiting the ESTA site. Management of international versions of the site will continue to focus on driving organic traffic through search engine optimization (SEO) as well as establishing links from key sources such as ESTA, embassies and consulates. U.S. Travel staff will prepare for the arrival of the Corporation, discussing how these two organizations can work together to leverage U.S. Travel assets.

OBJECTIVE THREE: Become the Champion of Travel and the Traveler

Being a champion of the traveler is in reality about looking through the eyes of the traveler and not our industry, public representatives or the media. Many of the tactics included in Objective One also address many of the hassles of travel. U.S. Travel's role is to develop relevant research and communications that speak directly to those controlling the fate of the industry.

OBJECTIVE FOUR: Promote Why Travel Matters

Travel and tourism is the nation's second-largest services export industry, third-largest retail sales industry and one of America's largest employers. It is in fact the first, second or third-largest employer in 29 U.S. states. The U.S. travel industry received more than \$645 billion last year, including international passenger fares, from domestic and international travelers. U.S. Travel continues to emphasize the importance of travel and tourism regarding jobs, tax revenues and community income, especially in the current economic climate. U.S. Travel statistics are placed front and center in all press releases, talking points and presentations, constantly showing why tourism is important.

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