

# Ready FOR Takeoff

## A Plan to Create 1.3 Million U.S. Jobs by Welcoming Millions of International Travelers

### Travel = American Jobs, U.S. Exports & Economic Growth

Inbound international travel currently:

- Supports 1.8 million U.S. jobs.
- Top industry export sector – more than \$134 billion in direct travel spending in the U.S.
- Overseas visitors spend on average \$4000 in the U.S. per visit.
- Global travel spending is expected to double over the next decade reaching \$2.1 trillion and making travel an increasingly important contributor to GDP growth for countries able to attract more overseas visitors.



### But Self-Imposed Barriers Limit U.S. Travel Growth and Impose Huge Opportunity Costs

An unnecessarily burdensome U.S. visa system is hurting our nation's ability to grow travel-related exports and employment. In fact, the U.S. has lost market share to other countries amid the global travel boom that took place over the last decade. If America had kept pace with the growth in global overseas travel between 2000 and 2010, 78 million more travelers would have visited the U.S., adding a total of \$606 billion to the economy that could have supported more than 467,000 additional U.S. jobs annually over these years.

The key barriers to increasing overseas travel to America are:

- A highly inefficient and unpredictable visa application approval process.
- Lack of personnel to process and interview visa applicants and lack of access to a U.S. consular facility.
- Poor planning and communication to applicants.

Q: What is it about the visa process that is most difficult for you?

	CHINA	INDIA	BRAZIL
Distance we have to travel to consulate	23.3%	4.8%	8.4%
Cost of the visa	27.9%	12.4%	26.3%
Amount of documentation required	12.7%	22.8%	43.0%
Concern that getting rejected will impact future applications	18.1%	33.8%	35.5%
Length of time it takes to get an interview	31.7%	17.0%	12.8%
No refund on a rejected visa application	30.4%	12.0%	18.8%
Other	1.9%	7.1%	9.0%

SOURCE: Mandala Research survey of 500 recent visitors from each of three countries, conducted August/September 2010

### Taking Down Those Barriers = Huge Opportunity Gains at No Cost to Taxpayers

Recapturing America's historic 17 percent share of worldwide overseas travel would, with little or no cost to taxpayers:

- Attract **98 million** more legitimate visitors.
- Create an additional **1.3 million U.S. jobs** by 2020 compared with 2010.
- Inject **\$859 billion** into the U.S. economy.



Discover America Partnership®

# Smart Visa Policy Is the Key to More American Jobs, More U.S. Exports & More Growth

Increasing America's share of overseas travel is a no-brainer! Here's how we can do it:

## 1. Align consular affairs with market demands.

- Issue a Presidential Directive to recapture 17 percent share of worldwide overseas travel and match Western Europe's current share of the long-haul travel market in Brazil, China and India by 2015.
- Include U.S. travel export promotion into the mission of the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs and establish formal goals related to recapturing a 17% share of the overseas travel market.
- Direct the State Department to pilot the use of videoconferencing technology to conduct visa interviews in key markets, such as Brazil, China and India.
- Direct the State Department to prepare and submit to Congress long-term strategic plans for opening additional visa offices that will meet visa demand in key markets, such as Brazil, China and India.

## 2. Reduce visa interview wait times to 10 days or fewer and match Western Europe's share of international visitors in Brazil, China and India.

- Formalize use of Limited Non-career Appointment (LNA) consular officers, individuals who do not join the Foreign Service but concentrate solely on processing nonimmigrant visas.
- Hire an estimated 440 new consular officers (Foreign Service & LNAs) divided between Brazil, China and India over the next five years.
- Expand the use of State Department programs that waive the in-person interview for previously vetted and interviewed applicants who are renewing their visas.
- Utilize demand management tools and techniques to improve management and visa processing efficiency.

## 3. Improve planning.

- Assess the impact that visa delays have on overall visa demand and travel exports, and measure the untapped demand for U.S. visas.
- End the artificial limits on visa interview dates and develop a more accurate measure of applicant backlogs.
- Increase transparency by making historical data on visa interview wait times for each consulate available to the public.

## 4. Preserve and expand the Visa Waiver Program.

- Direct the Departments of Homeland Security and State to immediately develop bilateral working groups with nations such as Brazil and Chile, which are interested in, but not yet eligible for, inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Use the working groups to develop frameworks (or road maps) that specify the actions that each country needs to take to be considered for VWP membership.
- Co-sponsor S. 497 & H.R. 959, the Secure Travel and Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2011, which updates the VWP framework to reflect improved capabilities to track travelers entering and exiting the United States and improves annual reporting to increase oversight and transparency.

### Key Growth Markets

Recommendations to attract more visitors from the fastest-growing, highest-spending markets of Brazil, China and India include:

**Brazil:** Department of State (DOS) should develop a formal working group with Brazilian officials that will identify steps Brazil must take to enhance its prospects to qualify for VWP.

**China:** DOS should negotiate an agreement with the Chinese government to grant Chinese travelers visas that are valid for at least five years versus the current one-year visa.

**India:** DOS should expand its Business Executive Program to assist companies in India that offer employees incentive travel awards to the United States.

Learn More and Read the Full Report at [www.smartervisapolicy.org](http://www.smartervisapolicy.org).

# FY12, State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Requests

## Request #1

### **Visa Processing Securely and Efficiently**

#### **Report Language**

The demand for U.S. visas in key emerging economies such as China and Brazil is not being met appropriately with current State Department resources. While the State Department has a goal of interviewing all visa applicants within 30 days of their application submission, it has failed to meet this performance standard in China and Brazil over the last year. For instance, over the last six months, the average wait time for a visa interview in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is 80 days with a peak wait time of 147 days this month. This problem will only get worse as government data predicts that by 2020, outbound travel from Brazil, China and India combined is expected to grow by 107 percent. In addition, 51 percent of overseas visitors to the United States are expected to come from countries where a visa is needed to enter the United States, a 16 percent increase from today.

The Committee is pleased that the State Department has proposed a pilot program to hire 20 “Limited Non-Career Appointment” (LNA) consular officers who can focus more effectively and economically on the visa processing need in China and Brazil. LNAs cost less than FSOs, LNAs can be hired for a finite period of time, and their consular work would generate significantly greater fees and export revenues for the U.S. economy. In order to meet the current and impending demand for U.S. visas securely and efficiently, the Committee directs the State Department to hire a sufficient number of LNA officers by 2015 in China, Brazil and India to facilitate a 12-day visa processing standard throughout the year. Each LNA will pay for itself through visa fee revenue collected by applicants.

#### **Bill Language**

The Secretary shall use MRV fees to hire a sufficient number of Foreign Service Officers and Limited Non-Career Appointment (LNA) consular officers at its Missions in China, Brazil and India to meet and maintain a 12-day visa processing standard throughout the year.

## Request #2

### **Visa Videoconferencing**

#### **Report**

The Committee directs the Secretary of State to develop and conduct a pilot program for processing B-1 and B-2 visas using secure remote videoconferencing technology as a method for conducting visa interviews of applicants. The Secretary is also directed to submit the report requested in the joint statement accompanying Public Law 111-8 on the implementation of a program to expand access to consular services through the use of alternative interview techniques including videoconferencing.

#### **Bill**

Videoconference Interviews:

- 1) The Secretary of State shall develop and conduct a pilot program for the processing of B-1 and B-2 visas using secure remote videoconferencing technology as a method for conducting visa interviews of applicants, and shall work with other Federal agencies that use such secure communications to help ensure security of the videoconferencing transmission and encryption.
- 2) Not later than 90 days after the end of the pilot program the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations detailing the results of such program including recommendations on whether it should be continued, broadened, or modified.

### Request #3

#### **Transparency**

##### **Report Language**

The Committee directs the Department to make monthly historical data on visa interview wait times for each consulate available to the public.

### Request #4

#### **Visa System Performance Assessment**

##### **Report Language**

The Committee directs the State Department to submit a report to Congress which shall include the following information:

- 1) A five-year forecast of demand for nonimmigrant visas in the following key high-growth markets: Brazil, China and India;
- 2) An assessment of how the State Department's five-year forecast compares to the Commerce Department's five-year visitor arrival projections from these countries and how the Commerce Department's arrival projections would impact visa interview delays in these three countries over the next five years based on existing State Department staff resources;
- 3) A plan to meet forecasted demand based on the Commerce Department's arrival projections data for Brazil, China and India over the next five years;
- 4) The total number of LNA's the State Department will hire per year over the next five years based on the Committee proposal to maintain a 12-day visa processing standard;
- 5) Strategies the State Department will use to maximize existing consular and embassy space to accommodate the new LNA personnel; and
- 6) Facility expansion needs in key growth markets once existing consular space is maximized.

### Request #5

#### **U.S. - Chinese Visa Terms**

##### **Report Language**

Currently, the U.S. and China permit each other only one-year visa terms. In contrast, the United States has 10-year visa terms with Brazil and India. Each time a Chinese national returns to renew a visa, it unnecessarily exacerbates the visa workload of the State Department. The Committee therefore directs the State Department to submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations on the potential benefits and risks of extending the visa validity period with China and any previous, ongoing, or planned efforts to negotiate a longer visa validity period for Chinese nationals seeking to enter the United States.