

Travel Industry Committed to Working with Department of Homeland Security, Private Sector to Build Efficient and Secure Air Exit System

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The Travel Industry Association (TIA) today released the following statement by Roger Dow, President and CEO of TIA, on the Department of Homeland Security's proposal to rely on airlines to collect biometric information from foreign travelers departing the United States:

The Travel Industry Association is committed to working with the Department of Homeland Security and other interested parties to ensure that a biometric air exit system is developed as expeditiously as possible. TIA believes that an air exit system will encourage and enforce compliance with U.S. immigration laws and allow the Department of State to develop meaningful data on visa overstay rates.

A stalemate between government and airlines - which threatens to end expansion of the Visa Waiver Program in 2009 - is not an acceptable outcome. Therefore, TIA will rally the travel community to support the quick implementation of a biometric air exit plan that meets homeland security goals and does not add new burdens to an already challenging air travel process.

In 2007, Congress enhanced the security requirements in the Visa Waiver Program and provided for a limited expansion. The Secretary of Homeland Security was granted authority to waive certain enrollment criteria for new countries contingent on the certification that the Department of Homeland Security can verify the departure of 97 percent of foreign nationals that exit through U.S. airports. Such an air exit system must collect biometric information by June 2009 in order for the Secretary of Homeland Security to maintain the waiver authority.

The Travel Industry Association is the national, non-profit organization representing all components of the \$740 billion travel industry. TIA's mission is to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within the United States. TIA is proud to be a partner in travel with American Express. For more information, visit www.tia.org.

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