

NBTA: US-VISIT Exit Plan Would Create Undue Stress on U.S. Economy

2008-05-01

The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) - the business travel industry advocacy organization - voiced concern about a plan to hold airlines and cruise lines responsible for collection of biometric identifiers from non-U.S. citizens as they exit the country. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) proposed the plan as a way to meet exit requirements of the US-VISIT border security program.

National Security Priority

Since the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), DHS has consistently broadened the role of the federal government and minimized the airline security role for departing passengers - an approach that has improved the nation's ability to meet travel-related national security priorities. In areas such as passenger screening, passenger pre-screening and watchlist reviews, and checking travel documents, the federal government now leads the security process. This approach that should also apply to border security functions conducted at the airport.

NBTA President & CEO, Kevin Maguire, CCTE, said, 'Immigration enforcement and border security are national security functions that should be managed and funded by the federal government.'

Targeting Travelers Burdens the Economy

According to DHS, the proposal would cost air and sea carriers up to \$3.7 billion over 10 years, costs that would most certainly be passed on to passengers. The proposal would essentially target travelers as the group that would pay for a national border security priority. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, the U.S. travel industry is a \$1.6 trillion dollar industry that directly employs 7.5 million workers. Increasing the cost of travel would only harm that important sector of the economy.

Maguire commented, 'The US-VISIT exit plan is the latest in a series of proposals to burden airlines with the collection, storage and distribution of additional passenger data. Each of these cascading requirements would further increase the cost of travel, creating an undue burden on the already uncertain U.S. economy. Once again, NBTA calls on the various government agencies to work together to find a common approach to travel passenger data that will meet the country's needs for the foreseeable future.'

Visa Waiver Connection

The US-VISIT exit tracking requirements is of concern to the business travel community not only because of the potential hard dollar costs, but also because its implementation is a prerequisite for further expansion of the Visa Waiver Program. Visa Waiver enables citizens from the United States' most important trading partners to travel here visa-free for up to 90 days, provided the country meets strict security standards.

Maguire added, 'Visa Waiver expansion is essential to ensuring the United States can continue to serve as a leader in the global economy. To support that economic goal and to ensure border security, NBTA will continue to work closely with DHS and the travel industry to find a workable solution for the US-VISIT exit requirement that can be implemented next year.'

The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) is the world's premier business travel organization. U.S.-based NBTA and its regional subsidiaries - NBTA Asia Pacific, NBTA Canada and NBTA Mexico - serve more than 3,200 members in 30 nations around the globe. NBTA has 41 U.S. Chapters with more than 5,000 members. NBTA members are corporate and government travel and meetings managers, as well as travel service providers, who collectively manage and direct more than US\$170 billion of global business travel expenditures annually. The association provides industry-leading networking, education & professional development, research, news & information, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.nbta.org.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article32406.html>

© 1998 - 2008 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html