



Travel Industry Association

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Contacts: Kristy Chandler
202.408.2172
Cathy Keefe
202.408.2183

**Expansion of Visa Waiver Program to
Strengthen American Economy,
Attract Up to One Million New Visitors to United States**

***Travel Community Applauds Bush Administration, Congressional
Leaders' Commitment to Improving Security, Visitor Entry Process***

Washington, DC – The Travel Industry Association (TIA) today praised President Bush's announcement that the following seven countries will be admitted to the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP): the Republic of Korea (South Korea), the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia. Expanding and strengthening the VWP will help the United States to welcome hundreds of thousands of new visitors annually, thereby strengthening America's economy and global image.

“Expansion of the Visa Waiver Program is a momentous leap forward for the American economy and proof that we can simultaneously strengthen America's security and welcome additional visitors,” said Roger Dow, President and CEO of the Travel Industry Association. “We applaud the Administration and Congress for taking this important step in reversing the significant decline in overseas travel to the United States since 9/11.”

In 2007, the United States welcomed two million fewer overseas visitors than it did in 2000 – despite an extraordinarily weak U.S. dollar and an additional 35 million long-haul travelers worldwide. The VWP allows citizens from participating countries to travel to the United States for up to 90 days without obtaining a visa. Some estimates suggest that the inclusion of seven additional countries to the VWP could help the United States to welcome up to one million additional visitors annually.

Enhanced security and expansion of the VWP was one of the reforms called for in TIA's “Blueprint to Discover America,” released in January 2007. TIA worked closely with the Congress to enact legislation last year to reform the VWP and with the Departments of Homeland Security and State to implement the new law. Additional expansion of the VWP to qualified countries could come to a halt in 2009 if the Department of Homeland Security does not deploy a biometric system for confirming the exit of foreign visitors

departing the United States. TIA strongly supports the exit requirement and is working with the entire travel community to devise a secure and efficient solution.

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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.