



## Remarks on Securing the Future of Travel and Tourism at the Second Annual Summit of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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 U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
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Well, thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, for that warm welcome. And thank you, Tom, also for your very kind and generous introduction. And at this point, let me thank you for the support that you have provided to me in a variety of capacities over the years, especially during that time of my life when I was out in the private sector and chairing America's Promise and working with young people and forming partnerships with groups such as the Chamber. It was also during that period that I was on the speaking circuit, where I got to know the travel and tourist industry very, very well. (Laughter.) Ahh, yes.

And so I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity, Tom. I want to thank the Chamber. I want to thank the National Chamber Foundation and the Travel Business Roundtable for co-hosting this important summit on securing the future of travel and tourism.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with all of you what the State Department is doing to advance President Bush's policy, a simple policy, of Secure Borders, Open Doors. Secure borders. We ought to know who's coming into our country, what they're coming in here for, where they're going, how long they're going to be here for and when they leave. Not unreasonable. We also have to make sure that, in having those secure borders, we also convey an attitude of openness. Open Doors. We want you to come. We want you come share the American experience.

Because to be true to ourselves as a democratic nation and to protect our national security, we must continue to be a welcoming country even as we take effective means to keep our enemies out. We must do both at the same time. And that is what our Secure Borders, Open Doors policy is all about.

Throughout America's history, openness has enriched our democracy, our culture and our economy. And in today's globalizing world, it has never been more true that a strong economy is just as essential to our national security as is a strong defense, a strong military. And the travel and tourism industry is one of the most vital segments of that vital economy. Last year, approximately 42 million foreign visitors spent over \$83 billion touring, working or studying in the United States and U.S. travelers going overseas spent \$78 billion.

Your industry is one of America's largest employers, directly generating some 7 million travel-related jobs. You also contributed nearly \$157 billion in payroll income and over \$93 billion generated in local, state and federal tax revenue. You are a big part of our economy, for sure, and President Bush and our whole Administration share your goal to succeed in what you're doing.

The attacks of 9/11 brought home to all of us the chilling fact, however, that in a 21st century world, terrorists and other adversaries have unprecedented reach and unprecedented mobility to strike us in ways that we could never have imagined. The defenses we used to have in the past against Cold War enemies or the Nazis or other enemies that we had, state enemies, were easy to see, easy to protect ourselves from. They didn't strike directly at our homeland.

In this instance, the terrorists struck directly at our homeland. They murdered some 3000 people, not just Americans, people from 90 countries, in the World Trade Center. They also delivered a blow to the United States economy and to world markets. Your industry in particular felt that impact, and your recovery has been all the more difficult because of the global economic slowdown that we saw over the last several years.

As we approach this summer, however, I am glad to report that at the State Department, anyway, we are seeing some very encouraging signs that the turnaround is here for you, that travel is on the upswing from its dramatic decline of the first couple of years after 9/11. More Americans are going overseas and more foreign visitors are coming to the United States. Our Passport Office is seeing a jump in passport applications of more than 22 percent over last year. And though we still have a very long way to go before we reach the volume of visa applicants that we had before 9/11, applications for visitor visas to the United States are also on the rise.

The picture is mixed with respect to student visas. The number of international students enrolled in the United States has grown each year, even in the post-9/11 period, but the rate of increase has slowed down. The international market for students is much more competitive than it used to be: France, Germany, elsewhere in the world, Australia, students have a broad choice. And clearly, we have to do a better job of attracting them here, attracting the world's rising generation to come study in America, come learn our values, come learn what kind of a people we are and take all of that back with you, as well as whatever education you picked up.

In February, for example, I welcomed to the State Department 25 Fulbright pioneers from a newly free Iraq. We've issued the first 25 Fulbright scholarships to Iraq now that it has rejoined the family of nations. And I wish you could have seen these wonderful people. They are now in some of our best universities. They're studying law, they're studying business, they're involving themselves in public health education, in journalism, public administration, education and environmental science, picking up the skills they need to go back to what will be a democratic Iraq and help to rebuild that

country.

Where else would I have wanted these youngsters to go, and not so youngsters, as it turned out? Where else would I want them to go, but to the United States of America? What other values would I want them to pick up, except the values and the education that they pick up here in the United States? These young Iraqis are so full of hope for the future and they are absolutely determined to return to their country and contribute to its reconstruction.

I reminded the students that other Fulbrighters just like them had risen to the challenge of leadership when their countries made historic transitions to democracy. Fulbright scholars stood at the forefront of Poland's first post-communist government. Poland's Foreign Minister is a Fulbrighter. A Fulbrighter helped to lead East Timor's struggle for independence. President Toledo of Peru is also a former Fulbrighter.



More than 200 of the State Department's International Visitors program participants have become heads of state or government. What a record. Among those leaders: Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, President Megawati of Indonesia, President Saakashvili, the new President of Georgia, who proudly tells me about the education he received here in the United States, and most of the members of his cabinet have been exposed to our international programs for education. President Konare, the former President of Mali and now the Chairman of the African Union Commission is also one of those graduates of our programs. It is likely that tomorrow's leaders are among the 30,000 men and women who participate each year in our State Department exchange programs.

Perhaps the next generation of leaders from the Arab and Muslim world will be found among the students selected for our Partnerships for Learning Initiative. Partnerships for Learning is an outreach effort that we put in place in the wake of 9/11. Under this initiative, 160 young people from predominantly Islamic countries are now studying at American high schools and living in American homes, and over 70 undergraduates from the Middle East countries are studying at American universities.

I had some of these young high school students into my dining room a few months back for an IFTAAR dinner. And rather than just have intellectuals and people from the think tank community around me at this dinner I said, "Well, just go get some young people. You know, c'mon. I'm an old geezer. Give me some young people to have dinner with." (Laughter.)

And they sat these high school students around the table with me, and they were all Muslim, all representing the various parts of the Muslim world, and it was such an experience for me to sit and talk to them and tell them about the American experience; tell them about the American immigrant experience; tell them about the diversity of our country; tell them about our value systems; tell them about the things they never will see in their television sets or not often enough. And when they left, I think they carried a little bit away from that dinner, but they carry a little bit away from every encounter they have for the year that they are here. And they will go back with a better feeling about our country, with a better understanding of what we stand for.

The personal and professional relationships that are developed during such exchanges can form a foundation of understanding and lasting partnerships, not just between young people, but between nations, between societies, between cultures.

By the same token, if we lose legitimate foreign scholars, if we lose them to procedural frustrations because it's too hard to get a visa, because they don't want to be bothered, because they're going to be hassled at the airport coming into the United States, we risk losing their goodwill, and that is a priceless thing to lose. The essential embracing spirit of America's attitude toward people is our greatest asset. And we must work together to ensure that our country remains a beacon for students, international tourists, immigrants, and business people.

These past few years have been fraught with challenges, but I believe that the United States is doing a better job than ever of balancing security with openness. The past 30 months have seen the creation of the Department of Homeland Security under the gifted leadership of Tom Ridge, who spoke to some of you last night, the largest reorganization of our government since World War II. And there have been other major changes in the measures we take to safeguard our borders and protect the integrity of the nation's immigration system. Norm Mineta, of course, now responsible for airport surveillance and security, as people come into the nation.

The Department of State is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security, with the Department of Transportation, and other government organizations to make even more improvements that minimize the negative impacts of new security procedures on legitimate travelers.

We are implementing an interlocking system of border security called US-VISIT, which I'm sure Tom may have spoken to you about, and this begins with our consular officers overseas collecting scanned fingerprints. The system ends with immigration officers of the Department of Homeland Security at our Ports of Entry and Departure verifying the identity of travelers. When this system was first put in, it got a lot of attention. We had problems with a couple of countries who felt offended by the fact that we would ask their citizens to place the two fingerprints on the scanner and have a photo taken.

But after awhile, people got used to it. And as we explained why we were doing it, not to harass them, not to hassle them, but to protect us, and also to protect them, so that they knew who their fellow travelers were, it has gained acceptability as a way of doing it. It is non-intrusive. It is inkless. You don't have to wipe your hands off. It's simply that, take a picture, you're through, it adds a few seconds to the process.

Since this program went into effect, US-VISIT, in January, three and a half million travelers have processed through US-VISIT without any appreciable lengthening of the wait times. And US-VISIT has prevented over 200 known or suspected criminals from entering our country. Secure Border, Open Door.

As you know, we have another problem that I talked to Tom and some of the others about a few moments ago. It comes about from our Visa Waiver Program. Congress set October 26th, 2004, this Fall, as the deadline when the 27 countries that are in our Visa Waiver, visa-free travel program, to begin issuing passports to these kinds of travelers that contain biometrics and are machine-readable, in the form of photographs or electronic chips. The law stipulates that the citizens of countries who don't meet the deadline of October 26th, 2004, will no longer have the privilege of visa-free travel to our country and they'll all have to now apply for visas.

It isn't likely that any of the countries in this program can make the deadline of October 26, 2004. Not because of a lack of interest or a lack of trying. It's that the standards for these new machine-readable passports were only put in place a year or so ago, and it takes time to put in place a passport system that will be foolproof, technically secure. And we have to give our friends the time to develop the right kinds of passports and to make sure that they have been checked out and tested, and they're ready to work.

We need an extension of that deadline. And if we don't get an extension of that deadline from Congress, we estimate that an additional five million people will have to go through our embassy procedures in these 27 countries in order to obtain passports. The other half of that is, though, that it won't be five million people because many of them will say, "We're not going to put up with it. Why should I go to the United States to go to a resort area when

I could easily go somewhere else without this kind of a problem?" We cannot allow this to happen and we have been working with the Congress.

Secretary Ridge and I testified a couple of weeks ago on the importance of giving us an extension to this deadline, and we have asked for a two-year extension of the deadline, and I hope that Congress will give us this extension. It is so essential.

This is part of our effort to rationalize our system in ways that people will understand, that speed up the whole process of obtaining a visa, but at the same time, making sure that we are not risking our security.

For the foreign travelers from non-waiver countries who must submit a visa application, things have gotten a lot better. Some 97 percent of the visa applications that we receive are processed in one or two days.

We're increasing the capacity of our databases to talk to one another so that we're not querying multiple databases. Increasingly, it's a centralized system where we can get rapid turnaround after searching all of our databases to make sure there is no derogatory information.

For the two-and-a-half percent of non-immigrant visa applicants who, for national security reasons, are subject to extra screening -- they popped up in some way -- we have made the screening process less onerous and more efficient by speeding up the exchange of information.

And so last year, the wait time for students and scholars who required clearances from Washington averaged two months. Today, 80 percent of these visas are issued within three weeks.

We recently increased to one year the validity of the clearances granted to certain groups, scientists and scholars, who participate in joint-research programs. I was getting killed by our friends around the world who kept saying, "You invite us to these scholarly conferences and you want our people to come and work with you, but it's too difficult to get them visas in time. You know that they are no risk to you. You know them as a group. They have been to your country on many occasions previously. Why do we have to go through this?"

So we are trying to create certain classes that can be allowed to come in on an expedited basis, making it even easier for them to acquire their visa. Travelers who need to make repeated visits within a given year may now do so without our consular officers having to go back to Washington for an additional name check if they are part of the categories I just discussed.

At the same time we're doing everything we can to cut wait times, to streamline our procedures. We have also, at the same time, taken steps to strengthen security. We have worked with the law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as I mentioned earlier, to make sure not only is the information consolidated, but the information is available to anyone who needs it -- whether you're a consular officer or whether you're an immigration official at a port of entry.

We are hiring additional consular officers. One of the things we've succeeded in doing at the Department over the last several years is to persuade the Congress to let us to hire more people -- above the level of attrition. For years, the State Department was starved of funds and we were not hiring the people necessary to meet the new workload.

A generous Congress supported President Bush's very, very significant request, significant request for a significant increase in the number of people that would be available to the Department, and you will see the result as we put more and more consular officers out in the field.

These security measures that I've touched on not only enhance the security of our own citizens, they make travel safer for the foreign public as well.

Keeping our homeland secure and our society open is too big a job for government alone. The private sector -- you all -- have to play a vital role in this process as well. And you do. And on behalf of all of my colleagues at the State Department, I want to express our appreciation to the Chambers of Commerce and the Travel and Tourism Industry for all that you have already done to help us make travel to and from the United States easier and safer for all.

As we implement President Bush's Secure Borders, Open Doors policy, we need to hear from you. I told Tom and I'll tell everybody here: When you have a problem or you think we're not doing it right, please write me, let me know, scream at me. Every major university president is now writing me letters at my invitation. (Laughter.) Come on, scream at me, and then I can scream at Tom Ridge. That's the way it works. (Laughter.)

But, more importantly, I want to make the case here in Washington to my colleagues in government who fully understand this problem, but also the Congress, that what we have to do is protect ourselves, but we've got to do it in a way that never causes us to lose that openness.

Share your insights with us. Give us ideas as to how we can speed up the process. Tell us what your problems are. Otherwise, I'll just sit over there on the 7th floor of the State Department thinking I know what's going on, but until you tell me how you see it in the field, I really won't know what's going on. Let me know how we are affecting your business. Give me anecdotes. As I heard earlier, people don't want to come here for a conference if they can go to London for a conference because it's easier. Oh, we've got to fix that. Don't want that to happen. I've got nothing against London; I just would prefer to have people come to the United States.

We encourage each and every one of you to view our website: [state.gov](http://state.gov). And it will give you insight, a lot of information on what's going on around the world, what's going on with our visa policies, what's going on in our organization to help you do your job better and to encourage people to come to the United States.

Since our nation's earliest days, people have come from all around the world. I love to say we are a nation of immigrants and we are enhanced by this. We are enhanced by the people who come here to live, the people who come here just to watch, the people who come here to get their healthcare taken care of, the people who come here to enjoy our resorts, the people who come here to get an education. We are so enriched. It's a shame that some of my colleagues in other nations around the world don't have the same kind of opening -- opening attitude toward immigration and toward visitors coming into their country that has made us such a vibrant society, made us such a vital force in the face of the Earth.

We have seen people come to this country and stay, and their children have thrived, as I am one of them. Most of you can tell a similar story. Others have not stayed. They have returned to their countries of origin, taking with them a better understanding of our nation and our values.

Today, the trendlines for travel and tourism are encouraging again and President Bush and I believe that the future of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Industry is bright. But, you know, it's not just tourism and industry and your business. You're helping me do foreign policy. This is not an abstraction for

me. When I go around the world -- I'm going to Jordan this weekend -- and when I talk to my colleagues from around the world, I've got to make sure they understand that we are open. I've got to make sure that they understand that we're doing everything we can to attract their youngsters to our shores.

It is a vital part of my foreign policy and the President's foreign policy goals, because if people think that America is hiding behind a fence, that America is not engaged in the world, if America is so concerned about its security that it is not open to people in other lands coming to visit, then it is not the same America we've been telling them about for all these years, that wonderful nation that has drawn from all nations and touches every nation in return, is still here, is still welcoming, still has that Statue of Liberty that stands in New York Harbor. Just like that Statue of Liberty, our nation has a spine of iron and steel, but also a welcoming torch.

Together, we will guard our country with vigor and vigilance just as the Statue of Liberty has guarded New York Harbor for all these years. And even as we hold high a welcoming light to good people across the globe, we will protect ourselves. But above all, let them see that welcoming light. Come, visit, travel, stay, if you will. Enrich us and we will enrich you. Thank you very much.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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