

# Remarks at U.S. Travel Association's International Pow Wow Luncheon, Los Angeles, California

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**Commerce Secretary John Bryson**

**Remarks at U.S. Travel Association's International Pow Wow Luncheon, Los Angeles, California**

Hello everyone! Is everyone having a good time here in my hometown of LA?

I want to thank Roger [Dow] for the kind words and for the invitation to be here. And I want to give a special welcome to all of our international visitors.

Today, all of the signs point in one direction—to America! There has never been a better time to visit the U.S. Last year, 62 million people came to visit our country. They spent a record \$153 billion dollars on hotels, cars, food, entertainment, and more. America had its largest trade surplus on record for travel and tourism – nearly \$43 billion dollars.

Today, it's full steam ahead for travel and tourism in the U.S.

Just last week, the Commerce Department announced that international visitors spent \$13.3 billion dollars on travel and tourism to the U.S. in February. That's up 14 percent from the same month last year. And now, I'm pleased to release the new forecast.

Here's the headline. By the year 2016, we project growth of 23 percent in the number of annual visitors to the U.S.—to 77 million. While Canada and Mexico will continue to drive the lion's share of that growth—we also expect increases from countries like Korea, Australia, and Argentina, and particularly big jumps from Brazil and China.

Why is this important? Put simply, more travel and tourism to America means more good American jobs. In fact, some studies show that the leisure and hospitality industry could add two to three million jobs this decade. It's the third-highest export of any sector in the U.S. economy.

The president and all of us throughout the administration have been focused on jobs from Day One.

That's why President Obama created a Task Force on Travel and Competitiveness. He asked the Secretary of the Interior—Ken Salazar—and me to work with this industry's top leaders to create a plan to attract even more visitors to America. I'm pleased to say that we've put the final touches on this new National Strategy and have given it to the president to review.

From the government's side, we are already hard at work. For example, we have already beefed up our capacity to process visa applications in places like China and Brazil. But we will need your help to do even more:

- How can we make our airports and travel hubs even more welcoming and easier to navigate?
- How do we make sure small businesses get the tools they need to grow and create jobs in this industry?
- How can we get the word out about one of our best-kept secrets—our national parks, public lands, and waters?
- And how can we strengthen partnerships with local and state tourism leaders—including all of you—to get the job done?

Overall: How do we foster more of the person-to-person connections that help us exchange not only dollars and products—but also greater understanding and cultural exchange between the U.S. and the rest of the world?

We simply cannot answer these questions and build on the momentum in this industry—without your help. And I should note that I am particularly excited to see Brand USA's campaign launch this afternoon, an effort supported by the Commerce Department.

So today, let's send a clear message: America is truly open for business, and the world should know it! Thank you.