

USTOA BRINGS MEMBER DELEGATES TO THE CAPITOL FOR ITS 12TH CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS

Key issues discussed include sustainability, US travel infrastructure, visa and passport processing, and National Parks among others



Dana Santucci (center), executive vice president, EF Education First, and USTOA chairman, Poses with delegates in front of the United States Capitol

NEW YORK – June 24, 2024 – The United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) escorted a group of Active Member tour operators and Associate Members to Washington, D.C., June 11-12, 2024, to advocate for tourism industry issues including sustainability, passport and visa application processing delays, promoting US tourism, Real ID, and more. The 40+ attendees from around the country met with officials on Capitol Hill including various Congressional delegations, members of Congress, and industry representatives.

“This year’s Congressional Caucus provided a wealth of information for members from the Department of Commerce, National Park Service, and Department of Transportation, among others, which led to valuable engagement and conversation with members of Congress on critical issues pertaining to our industry’s future,” said USTOA President & CEO Terry Dale.

The morning of the caucus kicked off with updates with Marc Lerro, program analyst for the TSA, Department of Homeland Security, followed by Alex Lasry, deputy assistant secretary for Travel and Tourism, Department of Commerce. Charged with implementing the Biden Administration’s National Travel and Tourism Strategy, Lasry emphasized the vital economic importance inbound tourism plays to the economy, especially as the US prepares to welcome even more global travelers for major international sporting events in the coming years.

Andrew Newhart, vice president of Government Relations for US Travel, spoke to the group about the impact of visa wait times on inbound tourism as well as sustainability advocacy efforts. Other speakers included attorneys from the US Department of Transportation; Jessica Klement, vice president,

Advocacy for the American Society of Travel Advisors, and Lena McDowall, deputy director, Management and Administration, National Park Service. Prior to lunch, the session concluded with remarks from Representative Mike Collins (R-GA-10).

Throughout the afternoon, teams of USTOA members visited the Capitol for meetings with leading members of Congress to discuss core issues. Sustainability, promoting US tourism, passport application processing delays, the visa processing backlog and visa waiver program, national parks funding, travel infrastructure, aviation consumer protections, and Real ID were among the topics discussed.

Dale continued, “USTOA’s twelfth Congressional Caucus was a highly productive gathering to drive home the value of the travel and tourism industry. Advocacy remains a major pillar of USTOA and is especially critical in guiding our country to a sustainable and responsible travel and tourism future.”

On behalf of all USTOA members, Dale extended his appreciation to the sponsors of the USTOA Congressional Caucus for their support including the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Board, which welcomed delegates for a lively dinner at the Sri Lanka Embassy on June 11; Museum of the Bible, meeting venue sponsor; Crum & Foster, host of the morning sessions on June 12; and CCRA Travel Commerce Network for supplying the name badges.

For more information on USTOA, visit www.ustoa.com.

About USTOA:

Representing \$16 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow six million travelers annually unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value, and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the USTOA’s Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business. As a voice for the tour operator industry for more than 50 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

Contact:

Gina Dolecki/Gabrielle Naucke

Redpoint

212-229-0119

dolecki@redpointmarketingpr.com / naucke@redpointmarketingpr.com