



## USTOA HOLDS INAUGURAL CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS IN WASHINGTON, DC

**NEW YORK** – July 9, 2012 – Commemorating 40 years as the premier association of vacation packages and tour companies, the [United States Tour Operators Association](#) (USTOA) held its first Congressional Caucus in Washington, DC on June 19- 20, 2012. More than fifty active and associate members, gathered at the JW Marriot Washington, DC to create a unified industry voice, learn about government issues that affect the travel industry and meet with elected officials on Capitol Hill.

“Government advocacy has been the association’s number one priority for the past few years and this caucus was a huge milestone in building USTOA’s voice and presence in Washington,” said Terry Dale, USTOA president. “USTOA has laid the groundwork educating congress on the issues most critical to our membership and encouraging their participation in the Congressional Travel & Tourism Caucus. We want congress to see us as an ally, working together to shape decisions impacting the travel industry.”

Opening remarks from Roger Dow, CEO and president of US Travel Association, addressed the JOLT (Jobs Originated through Launching Travel) Act, introduced by Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY), that would implement a system of reforms to streamline and enhance current travel regulations into the U.S. from foreign countries. JOLT stresses a number of changes to the current visa program, as well as a plan to increase tourism and business travel to the United States which Dale cited as “critically important to international travelers and USTOA members.”

Association members were joined by Samuel Podberesky, assistant general counsel for Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), who provided an update on proposed rulemaking regarding website accessibility to be released later this year. In addition, he spoke about potential rulemaking for 2013 which will likely ask tour operators to adopt “minimum customer service standards” and disclose airlines whose tickets they do or do not sell as well as details on airline commissions received. DOT’s new and proposed requirements “impose costly regulatory burdens on tour operators in the midst of a fragile economic recovery,” added Dale. USTOA continues its request for DOT to reexamine its recent and proposed rules and take into account the realities of the U.S. tourism marketplace.

USTOA was briefed on people-to-people travel to Cuba and the “Open Borders” policy, an effort strongly supported by USTOA. “Travel to Cuba presents a unique economic opportunity for USTOA members, and there is significant demand in the market to take advantage of these regulatory changes,” expressed Dale. USTOA continues to seek clarification on what remains to be a challenging application process and urges Congress to work with the Administration to ensure that people-to-people is done in accordance with U.S. laws and regulation, in a timely and effective manner.

Additionally, members of USTOA had the opportunity to participate in a roundtable discussion with major airline carriers including Delta Airlines, American Airlines, United Airlines, US Airways, among other international carriers to discuss opportunities to collaborate and specific barriers of sales.

For questions and more information on USTOA, visit [www.ustoa.com](http://www.ustoa.com), call 212-599-6599, or email [information@ustoa.com](mailto:information@ustoa.com)

### **About USTOA:**

The member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow travelers 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 40 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

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