



USTOA BRINGS MEMBER DELEGATES TO THE CAPITOL TO CHAMPION INDUSTRY KEY ISSUES WITH LAWMAKERS



USTOA delegates outside the office of Representative Abigail Spanberger (D-VA).

NEW YORK (June 24, 2022) – The [United States Tour Operators Association \(USTOA\)](#) led a group of Active Member tour operators and Associate Members to Washington, D.C., June 14-15 to advocate for a number of key industry issues. Thirty-plus attendees from around the country met with 34 officials across Capitol Hill, including multiple Congressional delegations, members of Congress, the Executive Branch, and industry representatives.

“The welcome and long-awaited announcement about removal of the pre-departure Covid-19 testing requirement received on the Friday prior, June 10, strengthened our resolve to meet with each of the legislators to reinforce the importance and urgency to protect and promote continued growth for the travel and tour industry,” said USTOA President & CEO Terry Dale.

The morning began with remarks from Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), author of the recently passed Restore Brand USA Act to restore funding to promote travel to the United States from abroad. Congresswoman Kathleen Rice (D-NY) addressed the group about her eight years in Congress and the need for true “across the aisle” collaboration. Tori Barnes, Executive Vice president, Public Affairs and Policy for the US Travel, advocated further removal of barriers to international visitors as well as increasing needed visas for the under-staffed hospitality industry. Additional speakers included Darien Flowers, Deputy Policy Director, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation at the US Senate; Kim Graber, Deputy Assistant General Counsel, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings for the US Department of Transportation, and Julie Heizer, Deputy Director, US Department of Commerce.

Following the morning program, teams of USTOA members visited the Capitol for meetings with leading members of Congress. Among the key issues addressed: the need to permanently revoke pre-arrival testing which currently has a 90-day review, support of the Omnibus Travel and Tourism Act (known as Tour Bus) to appoint a Cabinet-level official to oversee the tourism sector, expedited visa and passport processing, restoration of the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) to provide much-needed Covid-19 economic relief, increased funding of the national parks, and expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.

Said Dale, "As USTOA celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, the caucus was particularly meaningful and, I believe, successful in communicating to members of Congress the significance of the travel and tourism industry to jobs and economic stability in the US, and specifically, the contribution of the tour operator members of USTOA. I am extremely grateful to our members who participated and appreciative of the time each speaker and member of Congress spent with the USTOA teams."

About USTOA:

Representing nearly \$19 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow 9.8 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 50 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

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