

Rep. Gus Bilirakis
Full Committee Markup - Opening Statement
July 15, 2014

Remarks Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate consideration of H.R. 4450, *the Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act*, which would reauthorize Brand USA for a limited time, adds numerous accountability measures, and strengthens the transparency of the public-private partnership that promotes increased tourism to the United States.

Last week, this bill passed the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade unanimously by a vote of 22-0.

Passage of H.R. 4450 will be good for the economy. A recent analysis performed by the independent firm Oxford Economics estimated that in FY 13 Brand USA generated 1.1 million additional international visitors who spent an estimated \$3.4 billion – generating economic revenue and supporting job creation in communities across America.

Brand USA does not impose a cost upon the federal government. In fact, it has helped to reduce the deficit during the last two fiscal years and is expected to continue to do so.

Federal taxpayer dollars are NOT used to fund Brand USA. Brand USA is supported by international visitors and private sector contributions. After it receives contributions from the private sector, Brand USA can only collect up to \$100 million in matching funds from fees paid by foreign travelers. Amounts collected in excess of that cap are returned to the Treasury for deficit reduction.

Finally, given the benefits to the economy across state lines, as well as the competitive nature of foreign competitors in travel promotion, Congress is well within its authority under the Commerce Clause to extend the Travel Promotion Act. Small state and local tourism offices and local small businesses across America are some of the strongest supporters of the Travel Promotion Act and benefit greatly from international tourism. Brand USA helps bridge these communities and opens up new markets to American competition.

I appreciate consideration of this legislation, which several commentators have noted includes important reforms. This bill improves an already-existing partnership. I urge support of this prudent and narrow reauthorization of the Travel Promotion Act.

I yield back.