



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION &
INFRASTRUCTURE

CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

May 26, 2022

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chair
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection &
Commerce
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection &
Commerce
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Bilirakis,

Thank you for the opportunity to have my bill, H.R. 6965, the *Visit America Act*, heard before your subcommittee today. The *Visit America Act* would help strengthen the U.S. travel and tourism industry at a time when it is needed most.

The pandemic has been difficult for our country, and our region in Southern Nevada was hit harder than anywhere. With a workforce heavily dependent on travel, tourism, and hospitality, many folks lost their jobs and livelihoods as the pandemic brought our economy to a halt.

Before the pandemic hit, Las Vegas had the highest concentration of employees in the U.S. tied to the tourism industry with 28 percent of the workforce. When the regional economy is tied so closely to the hospitality sector, it is extremely vulnerable to economic shocks. In the first year of the pandemic, only 19 million people visited Southern Nevada, our lowest volume since 1989, representing a 55 percent decrease from pre-pandemic levels. As a result, unemployment spiked to 33.3 percent and averaged 14.7 percent throughout 2020.

Fortunately, the tide is beginning to turn. I have heard from multiple businesses in Southern Nevada that rooms are fully booked on the weekends and tax revenue is up 4.2% as a result of the pent-up demand for travel. Yet, we need to do more to insulate this industry from future disruptions and create a long-term strategy for its resilience.

That is why I introduced the *Visit America Act* which would create an assistant secretary position within the Department of Commerce focused on coordinating travel and tourism policy across federal stakeholders.

Currently, the U.S. is the only member of the G20 that does not have a Cabinet-level or equivalent position focused on tourism. By elevating this role within the Department of Commerce, we are also recognizing the strategic importance of the travel economy in the age of global competitiveness.

Additionally, my bill would formally authorize the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board to serve as the advisory body to the Secretary of Commerce and to help develop a 10-year travel and tourism strategy that sets forth goals for international visitation and travel exports, and ensures domestic policy is optimal for achieving these priorities.

As the subcommittee continues to consider legislation to strengthen our economy, I really appreciate your allowing my bill to be a part of the discussion. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dina Titus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dina" and last name "Titus" clearly distinguishable.

Dina Titus
Member of Congress