



U.S. Travel Association Delivers Over 21,000 Keep America Meeting Petition Signatures to Senate Commerce Committee

Grassroots Petition Effort Largest Industry Demonstration Of Support Showing Importance of Meetings, Events & Incentive Travel

Washington, D.C. – May 18, 2009 – In an impressive show of industry unity, more than 21,000 signatures from the Keep America Meeting online petition were delivered by the U.S. Travel Association to the Senate Commerce Committee last week during its Senate Hearing on Travel chaired by Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) with ranking member Mel Martinez (R-FL).

“The Keep America Meeting campaign galvanized our industry by giving individuals a collective voice to speak out about the importance of meetings, events and incentive travel programs,” said Roger Dow, President and CEO, U.S. Travel Association. “Keep America Meeting is an important grassroots component of our overall Meetings Mean Business campaign. The many petition signatures allow us to tangibly demonstrate the widespread support of this issue to Washington D.C.”

Representing U.S. Travel Association at the May 13th Senate meeting were Rossi Ralenkotter, President and CEO, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and Jay Witzel, President and CEO of Carlson Hotels, who presented the petition signatures and spoke about the downturn in meetings and events and its impact on local communities across the nation.

Keep America Meeting was launched in February 2009 to support the meeting industry. The petition drew widespread support from individuals in all 50 states, and even around the world. It was signed by people employed in all facets of the meetings, events and incentive travel industry, including bellmen, housekeepers, event producers, meeting planners, hotel managers and numerous local small business owners. The petition was also signed by family members who are concerned about the loss of meeting and event revenues and the impact on their lives.

“We launched the Keep America Meeting campaign so people in all areas of this industry could have one forum where they could show their support,” said Alison Smith Jenks, creator of the Keep America Meeting petition and Vice President, Marketing at TBA Global. “Now that the signatures have been delivered, Keep America Meeting will continue its grassroots initiative to educate and activate individuals involved in meetings, events and incentive travel.”

The industry is encouraged to join Keep America Meeting through its online social networks on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) or Twitter ([@KeepMeeting](#)) to hear industry updates.

Keep America Meeting recently engaged its audience to support the U.S. Travel Association’s first Travel Rally Day on May 12th, leveraging the power of social media to connect the community simultaneously live and online. Participants used the hashtags “rallyday” or “ntw09” to tag comments and photos about the rally.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, meetings and events are responsible for 15 percent of all travel-related spending, create nearly \$40 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state and local level and generate more than one million jobs. Without the jobs generated by meetings, events and incentive travel, the current unemployment rate of 7.6 percent would rise to 8.2 percent and cost the average American household an additional \$136 in taxes annually.

Keep America Meeting was created by TBA Global in partnership with the U.S. Travel Association with support from the Event Marketing Institute. It is endorsed by a non-partisan group of associations, publishers and companies. A complete list of endorsers is listed on www.keepamericameeting.org.

U.S. Travel Association

The U.S. Travel Association is the national, non-profit organization representing all components of the \$740 billion travel industry. U.S. Travel's mission is to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within the United States. For more information, visit www.ustravel.org.

About TBA GLOBAL

Founded in 1994, TBA Global (www.tbaglobal.com) is an award winning, privately-held agency that creates nontraditional marketing and communications programs, events and meetings for high-profile businesses and associations worldwide. TBA Global is ranked in Advertising Age Magazine's Top Promotion and Event Marketing Agencies (April 27, 2009). TBA Global has 18 offices in North America and the U.K.

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