



Shown here are attendees, organizers, and speakers at the TravelAbility Summit's reception on June 6 at the Hilton Orlando.

TravelAbility Summit Brings Attention to Accessibility for Travelers with Disabilities

On the Edge of an Emerging Market

By Grant Broadhurst

Among the more than 120 attendees and speakers at the TravelAbility Summit, there was a strong sense of purpose and camaraderie. They believe accessible tourism will be of growing business importance—and it's personal to them.

At the TravelAbility Summit held June 5-7 at the Hilton Orlando, disabilities weren't shoved into a corner; they were front and center, including among the speakers. Hence a ramp up to the stage—a necessity for those wheeling, not walking, up to share how the travel industry can become more inclusive to people with disabilities.

Accessibility was presented as part and parcel of a trifecta of access-
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Roger Dow at IPW: "We're Back in Business"

Says America Is Ready to Welcome the World

By Grant Broadhurst

"This is really the IPW that signals to the world that we're back in business," Roger Dow, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, said at a June 7 press conference.

Held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, U.S. Travel's IPW conference drew nearly

double the attendance as in Vegas last September, drawing nearly 4,800 attendees from 60 countries—including nearly 500 members of the press.

Though Dow noted that changes still need to be made—including getting rid of the COVID-19 testing requirement for international travelers—a major difference between IPW 2022 and IPW 2021 is the borders

have been open for non-essential travel since November.

"We're thrilled to be the first 'welcome back' globally to live in-person, face-to-face events, and we just couldn't be more honored and thrilled to be having everybody back in Orlando," Mike Waterman, President and CEO of Visit Orlando,

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Pharmacists, Physician Associations Clash Over Rights to COVID-19 Treatments

By Julia Stumbaugh

Associations representing pharmacies are lobbying the federal government to extend pharmacists' ability to administer COVID-19 tests, treat-

ments and vaccines, in opposition to physicians' associations who want the entirety of COVID-19 patient care left to doctors.

Eighty-four groups representing pharmacy

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USAE Debuting USAExtra in July

Weekly Edition Transitioning to Digital Only

By Todd McElwee

Striving to more thoroughly and thoughtfully cover associations and the meetings industry, *USAE* will debut *USAExtra*—a new monthly print publication offering premium and unique featured-focused content—on July 4, 2022. Available to all print subscribers, issues will be dated on the first Monday of each month and be delivered via First Class Mail.

USAE's 'E' First News Monday will continue to be published digitally 51

weeks a year and retain the industry-leading coverage readers have enjoyed for 40 years. June 27 is the final print edition.

On the Mondays *USAExtra* is delivered, paid print subscribers will still receive "USAE's 'E' First News Monday" in their inbox.

"Celebrating its 40th anniversary in September, *USAE* has been both a print publication since its inception as well as a 'turn-the-page' 'e' pub for over 10 years," Publisher Ross E. Heller said. "Of course, as

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NEWS

GBTA, U.S. Travel Advise Senate on Reviving Conventions Through International Travel

By Julia Stumbaugh

The U.S. Travel Association and the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) arrived on Capitol Hill on June 7 to speak with the Senate about how the federal government can facilitate international travel in order to help trade shows, conventions, and local tourism economies recover from the pandemic.

Business travel is recovering from COVID-19 shutdowns more slowly than other travel sectors. U.S. Travel reports business travel in 2021 represented just 56% of pre-pandemic levels, amounting to annual loss of \$152 billion.

In a hearing titled "Reviving Conventions and Tourism Through International Travel," Suzanne Neufang, CEO and Executive Director, GBTA, and Tori Emerson Barnes, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs and Policy, U.S. Travel, spoke with the Senate Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade and Export Promotion about how the federal government can expedite the industry's return to normal by changing the United States' air travel policies

for inbound international travelers.

Neufang told the Senate subcommittee the U.S. mandate requiring COVID-19 tests for inbound travelers is keeping American business travelers from leaving for fear of being trapped abroad with a positive test, and preventing international business travelers from planning conventions and tradeshow in the United States.

"The testing requirement is impacting people's willingness to travel and puts the U.S. at risk of falling behind other countries as a travel and business meetings destination," Neufang said. "It is because these meetings often get planned months, and even a year or two, in advance, that now the U.S. is at a great disadvantage."

Neufang cited GBTA's own difficulty in attracting pre-pandemic attendance numbers to their meeting. In 2019, the annual GBTA Convention brought in 7,100 attendees from 80 countries to Chicago. The 2022 convention, which will take place from August 14-17 in San Diego, is expected to bring in about 70% of that 2019 attendance. Just 10% of registered attendees are arriving

from outside the United States.

"Business travel recovery is also facing other headwinds including rising inflation, staffing shortages and supply chain delays," Neufang said. "Therefore, it is clear that we must remove the asymmetric barriers that remain such as inbound testing and create a safe and easy path forward for international businesspeople to return to attending tradeshow and conventions in the U.S."

Emerson Barnes added other ways the federal government can accelerate international travel, including expediting the tourist and business travel visa process and

providing federal aid for business travel expenses.

Emerson Barnes also expressed U.S. Travel's support for the "Omni-bus Travel and Tourism Act," which was introduced by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Mass.), former Senate Commerce Committee chair, in December 2021.

This act would appoint an "Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism" to oversee international travel to the United States. Emerson Barnes noted the United States is currently the only G20 country without a federal agency or cabinet-level official directing tourism policy.

Pharmacists

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interests, including the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), the American Pharmacists' Association, FMI— The Food Industry Association and the National Grocers Association, wrote to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra on June 7 requesting clarification of how long pharmacists' expanded scope of patient care, granted on an emergency basis during the pandemic, will last.

The ability for pharmacists to treat, test for, and vaccinate against COVID-19 is currently permitted under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act, which the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) implemented in March 2020.

The PREP Act expands the legal ability of pharmaceutical producers and healthcare providers to implement pandemic control measures during a Public Health Emergency (PHE). The current PHE, which has been extended in 90-day increments since January 2020, is set to expire on July 15.

The 84 pharmacy trade groups asked Becerra for confirmation as to whether pharmacists' legal ability to diagnose and treat COVID-19 will continue—even if the PHE ends—until the expiration of the PREP Act on October 1, 2024.

"Advance notice of any expiration is critical, given the extensive operational changes and considerations that would need to be untangled and ramped down," said the pharmacy associations.

A recent Morning Consult poll commissioned by NACDS concluded 70% of Americans support extending these pharmacy policies and 68% support making them permanent, even after

the PREP Act expires in 2024.

Accordingly, NACDS and other associations representing pharmacy interests are lobbying Congress to enact HR 7213, the "Equitable Community Access to Pharmacist Services Act," which would extend pandemic-related pharmacy health services beyond federal emergency orders.

This expansion of pharmacists' scope of patient care is being opposed by groups representing doctors and physicians, including the American Medical Association (AMA).

In an April letter opposing HR 7213, James L. Madara, CEO and Executive Vice President, AMA, said "pharmacists should not be able to diagnose, prescribe or dispense prescription medication without a valid order by a licensed physician."

"Pharmacists, though trained in the chemical components of medication, do not have the holistic or comprehensive medical knowledge of physicians...the simple fact is that COVID-19 is a complicated disease that has killed nearly one million people in the United States," said Madara.

Steven C. Anderson, President and CEO of NACDS and Chair of ASAE, argued the ability of local pharmacies to diagnose and prescribe is crucial to pandemic containment. According to the White House, approximately two out of every three American COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered at pharmacies.

"The access provided by pharmacies—the face of neighborhood healthcare—is sorely needed; it in no way replaces physicians, but rather provides access that is otherwise impossible in the healthcare delivery system today," Anderson said.

U.S. Travel Welcomes Administration's Strategy to Boost International Visitation

By Todd McElwee

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo announced on June 6 a new National Travel and Tourism Strategy that focuses federal efforts to support the nation's travel and tourism sector.

The plan sets a five-year goal of attracting 90 million annual international visitors to the country, with an estimated spend of \$279 billion each year.

"The recovery of American travel jobs and visitor spending hinges upon the annual growth of international inbound travel," said Roger Dow, President & CEO, U.S. Travel Association. "America must apply every possible resource at rebuilding it to full strength to benefit American workers and businesses in every pocket of the country. The new National Travel and Tourism Strategy comes at an important time when international travel spending in the U.S. was still 78% below 2019 levels

in 2021.

"We commend the leadership of Commerce Secretary Raimondo and the Tourism Policy Council and applaud the ambitious goal of attracting 90 million visitor arrivals annually in the U.S. by 2027. The strategy sets out specific actions that the government can take to rebuild our travel economy and make it more globally competitive than it was before the pandemic."

The Tourism Policy Council, a federal interagency council created by Congress, was charged by Raimondo with creating the strategy to support its namesake sector. Four pillars define the plan: promoting the United States as a travel destination; facilitating travel to and within the United States; ensuring diverse, inclusive, and accessible tourism experiences; and fostering resilient and sustainable travel and tourism.

"Across all 50 states, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia,

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