



U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION

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Travel Industry Launches Campaign to Defend Business Meetings and Events from Politicized Attacks

“Meetings Mean Business” Gives Voice to Millions of Working Americans, Hundreds of Local Communities

Dow: “Climate of fear is killing jobs and hurting communities”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Travel Association today launched the “Meetings Mean Business” campaign, a major initiative intended to push back against the political demonization of business meetings and events. The campaign comes as companies – most of whom have not received taxpayer assistance – cancel thousands of meetings and events, often out of fear that they will be singled out by politicians.

“Make no mistake, companies that have received taxpayer assistance must be held to a different standard and conduct their business in a transparent and responsible manner,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “But the pendulum has swung too far. The climate of fear is causing a historic pullback of business meetings and events, with a devastating impact on small businesses, American workers and communities.”

According to a new survey by Meetings and Convention Magazine conducted prior to last week’s firestorm over Northern Trust, more than 20 percent of companies that have not received taxpayer assistance have cancelled events due to recent media and political attention. More than half (52%) claim the news coverage has been extremely or moderately influential on their companies’ decisions to hold events.

“Our campaign will challenge policymakers to tone down the dangerous rhetoric, embrace sensible guidelines for companies receiving assistance and promote travel as an economic solution.”

The “Meetings Mean Business” campaign – www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com – is a comprehensive effort, including extensive grassroots mobilization, paid advertising and new media strategies. Campaign components include:

- Development of local coalitions representing workers, small businesses and community leaders, who will speak out on the benefits of meetings and events;
- Groundbreaking research that demonstrates the return on investment of meetings, events and performance incentive travel;
- Economic impact analysis at the state and congressional district level in terms of jobs, economic growth and tax revenue associated with meetings and events;
- Aggressive print and online paid advertising that clearly identifies the value of meetings and events and the unintended victim of its demise; and
- The creation of a rapid-response war-room to counter-act false accusations against legitimate travel activities.

Meetings and events are responsible for nearly 15% of all travel in the United States and create \$101 billion in spending, one million jobs and nearly \$16 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state and local level. Without the jobs generated by travel for meetings and events, the unemployment rate in the United States would jump from 7.6% to 8.2%.

U.S. Travel is conducting its campaign in partnership with the American Hotel and Lodging Association, Destination Marketing Association International, International Association of Exhibitions and Events, Meetings Professional International, National Business Travel Association, Professional Convention and Management Association and SITE (formerly the Society of Incentive Travel Executives).

These associations recently released recommended meetings and events guidelines for companies receiving taxpayer assistance. The groups are strongly encouraging the U.S. Treasury Department to embrace these guidelines and, in so doing, establish transparent standards for those who have accepted federal government support.

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Previously the Travel Industry 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. U.S. Travel is proud to be a partner in travel with American Express. For more information, visit www.ustravel.org.