



STATEMENT

OF

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AT A HEARING ON

**PROMOTING TRAVEL TO AMERICA: AN EXAMINATION OF ECONOMIC
AND SAFETY CONCERNS – PART II**

BEFORE THE

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERSTATE COMMERCE, TRADE AND TOURISM**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2007 @ 10:00 am
253 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING**

GOOD MORNING, CHAIRMAN DORGAN, Senator DeMint and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to be here today to join my colleague Mr. Robert Jacksta in representing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and to discuss the efforts of the Department to facilitate travel and tourism policy for the United States. The DHS Private Sector Office was given in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 the very important responsibility of working with, and consulting with, the travel and tourism industry. As a result, significant effort of our office goes towards this goal. This is in addition to the overall mission of our office, which is to provide America's private sector with a direct line of communication to DHS, utilize information received from the private sector, and promote Departmental policies to the private sector.

I first would like to emphasize that we have established and maintained very strong relationships with the industry's largest associations, including the Travel Industry Association of America, Travel Business Roundtable, and the World Travel and Tourism Council. We have also reached out to and worked well with other sector-specific organizations, including, but not limited to, the American Bus Association, the National Restaurant Association, the International Council of Cruise Lines, NAFSA: the Association of International Educators, the American Hotel and Lodging Association, and the Air Transport Association. We also work with individual companies, including Disney Parks and Resorts and Marriott Hotel. As a result of these relationships, we have learned private sector best practices and have encouraged their use by the U.S. government.

As you may know, the Rice-Chertoff Joint Vision, which is commonly referred to as the Rice-Chertoff Initiative (RCI), was announced in January of 2006 by the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security in order to focus efforts on the important need to facilitate travel while ensuring the security of the nation. Secretary Chertoff has tasked my office with coordinating progress on the objectives laid out in the RCI. The Private Sector Office has played an integral role in forming and coordinating a successful network to make this happen. This network has three levels: 1) coordination within DHS; 2) inter-agency approach, facilitating communication among multiple Departments of the U.S. government; and 3) linkages to the private sector.

Let us start by discussing the first level of coordination within DHS. Over the past year, we have worked with all DHS components that affect travel and tourism. This includes U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Transportation Security Administration, the Privacy Office, the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, US-VISIT, as well as my own Directorate, the Policy Office. The Policy Office sets DHS policy. As you may know, DHS sets the visa policy which the Department of State then executes— an example of a close and productive working relationship between the agencies.

This leads me to point out the second level of the network: coordination among DHS and other governmental agencies. When Secretary Rice and Secretary Chertoff announced their joint vision, it was the continuation of a very productive relationship between the

Departments. We at the Private Sector Office have collaborated closely with Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs, to meet the goals outlined by the initiative. One example of streamlined coordination between the Departments is the extension from 90 days to 120 days of the amount of time before the start of classes that international students can apply for a visa. This extension was approved by both DHS and State and is currently being implemented by the Department of State at U.S. Consulates around the world and communicated on the Department's website. This ruling makes studying in the United States more convenient and attractive to international students.

In addition to collaborating with State, the network includes a strong partnership with the Department of Commerce. This includes participation with the Tourism Policy Council, led by Secretary Gutierrez and comprised of 17 agencies and offices of the federal government.

This network also is not complete without involvement by the private sector, including the airlines, amusement parks, hotels, universities, hospitals, and trade associations. It is at this level where the Private Sector Office lends value by exchanging useful information advocating private sector interest when policies such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) are being drafted. Our Office also helps to incorporate best practices. Government agencies must coordinate better not only amongst themselves, but with private industry as well. A system for promoting cooperation between the government and the private sector to promote travel to the United States is a

recommendation laid out by the travel and tourism industry. We recognize the value of public-private partnerships.

One example of a system where all three levels come together is the creation and implementation of the Secure Borders Open Doors Advisory Committee (SBODAC), an advisory board to the RCI, formed under the auspices of the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) in coordination with the Department of State. The SBODAC represents a broad spectrum of private sector partners impacted by RCI and its programs and completes one of the 13 RCI objectives. Secretaries Rice and Chertoff selected the members of the Committee including leaders from academia, business, hospitals, media, and the travel and tourism industry.

The first meeting of the SBODAC was held on December 6, 2006, and focused on Model Ports of Entry and One Stop Redress. Present at the meeting were representatives from private industry in addition to officials from the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Commerce, and Education. The SBODAC has since formed four working groups to address various components of RCI: 1) public diplomacy and international outreach; 2) visa policy and processing; 3) critical success factors and metrics; and 4) ports of entry. These working groups are meeting throughout the month of March of this year with colleagues from DHS and the Department of State to start putting forth recommendations with the goal of achieving a balance between security and economic prosperity.

Another example of this third level of the network is DHS' work with the Department of Commerce's Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, headed by Mr. Jay Rasulo of Disney Parks and Resorts, whom I know testified before you on January 31 of this year. Our Office joined the Department of State in presenting a six-month RCI Progress Report to the TTAB at their July 2006 meeting in Chicago. In other meetings with the TTAB, we have reported on the status of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative and heard the concerns and recommendations of the board.

One recent example of this is our work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to incorporate the participation of the Travel Industry Association, Disney Parks and Resorts, and Universal Parks and Resorts into a task force that will form recommendations to improve the entry process.

Another example of collaborative work we've done with private industry is collaboration during the air roll-out of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. In the months before the roll-out, DHS worked with our travel and tourism stakeholders, including the airlines, hotels, travel distribution channels (such as Expedia and Orbitz), to ensure that travelers were aware of the new passport requirements far in advance of the deadline. Success was demonstrated by the numbers, as 94% of Americans that entered the U.S. by air had passports the week before implementation and 99% of travelers had passports by the second day after implementation of the air rule. We will continue our collaboration with the travel and tourism industry with the land and sea rollout.

While we have had the pleasure of helping to form the network of players for RCI, we are also pleased to witness the progress that others have made on the initiative. In addition to the SBODAC, DHS and the Department of State are on a path to meet all 13 of the RCI objectives. Today I especially want to highlight the efforts of my colleague, Mr. Robert Jacksta, in leading DHS full speed ahead on RCI's first objective in creating our two model ports at Washington Dulles International Airport and Houston Bush-Intercontinental Airport, with new signage already up and more progress on recommendations already on the way. I would also like to highlight the success of DHS' first one-stop travel screening redress program, known as DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (TRIP). The system satisfies another of RCI's objectives and has begun receiving redress requests as of February 20, 2007.

While we are pleased with the successes of the past year, we are also aware of the continuing need to evaluate and improve on our efforts. At the Private Sector Office, we understand the importance of this industry to our nation and are continuously assisting DHS in finding the right balance between economic vitality and national security. We are cognizant of the need for our government and private sector partners to work closely in order to facilitate travel in a safe and secure manner and demonstrate the greatness of this nation to international visitors. As the industry's research has pointed out, traveling to the United States makes visitors 74% more likely to feel extremely favorable about our country. The Blueprint to Discover America lays out some policy recommendations, which I would welcome the opportunity to address for you during the question and

answer session. Many of these recommendations are consistent with current government programs which have been underway since the inception of RCI.

I close today by emphasizing that completion of the objectives of RCI requires successful work and coordination within agencies, between agencies, and through public-private partnerships. We are using this three-tiered network to reach our goals. Thank you Chairman Dorgan, Ranking Member DeMint, and Members of the Subcommittee for providing me the opportunity to update you about our efforts. I look forward to your questions.