

ISSUE BRIEF

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Global Entry Reciprocity: Creating a Trusted Travel Superhighway

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The United States' share of international travel is declining. In 2010, the U.S. share of the global overseas travel market was 11.6 percent, down more than 5 percent from 2000. From an economic perspective alone, boosting international travel should be a top priority. Inbound travel to the U.S. already supports almost 2 million American jobs, and the value of tourism and travel's contribution to the global economy is expected to double over the next 10 years to over \$2 trillion in GDP.

One clear way to help ease the burden of international travel would be to encourage U.S. friends and allies—particularly Visa Waiver Program (VWP) member nations—to adopt programs that are reciprocal with the U.S. Global Entry Program. Through Global Entry, pre-vetted U.S. citizens, permanent residents,

and select other foreign nationals may receive streamlined entry to the U.S. at electronic kiosks. By encouraging more nations to adopt similar, reciprocal programs, the U.S. and its allies could create a trusted travel superhighway, facilitating international travel both to and from the U.S.

Global Entry Program. Made permanent in February 2012, the Global Entry Program is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows low-risk, pre-approved travelers expedited access into the U.S. Applicants undergo a rigorous background check and interview process before becoming eligible to participate in the program.

Approved travelers can approach a Global Entry kiosk at airports rather than waiting in line for border and customs clearance. There, travelers present their machine-readable passport or U.S. permanent-resident card, place their fingertips on a scanner for verification, and make a customs declaration. While Global Entry is intended to offer expedited entry, members may still be selected for further examination upon entering the U.S.

Open to citizens of the U.S., the Netherlands, and South Korea, as well as U.S. lawful permanent

residents and Mexican nationals, Global Entry currently has over one million trusted travelers in the program. Citizens of the United Kingdom, Germany, and Qatar may also now participate in limited Global Entry pilot programs, and Canadian citizens may participate through membership in the bilateral trusted-traveler program between the U.S. and Canada known as NEXUS.

As of mid-2012, there were Global Entry kiosks at 25 major airports. At that time, members had used these kiosks more than 2.6 million times, reducing traveler wait times by 70 percent and saving CBP officers more than 50,000 inspection hours, allowing them to focus resources on individuals of unknown or high-risk status.

Expanding Ranks of Trusted Travelers. In January 2012, President Obama called on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expand reciprocal agreements for trusted traveler programs, such as Global Entry. In response, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and Republic of Korea Minister of Justice Jae-Jin Kwon announced in June a trusted-traveler program reciprocity agreement between the U.S. Global Entry

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program and South Korea's Smart Entry Service. With this agreement, Korea became the third nation, joining Canada and the Netherlands, to have a fully reciprocal public trusted traveler program with the U.S.

By entering into these bilateral agreements, the U.S. realizes three benefits:

- Expedited entry for U.S. citizens traveling abroad;
- Enhanced ease of travel for foreign visitors to the U.S.; and
- Additional vetting of foreign nationals before arrival in the U.S. per standards agreed upon by DHS.

In other words, foreign participants in the program can enter the U.S. with fewer delays while homeland security is enhanced. Given these benefits and the value of international travel to the U.S., the Obama Administration should do more to expand the ranks of nations with Global Entry reciprocity agreements with the U.S.

Regaining U.S. Share of International Travel. With high visa wait times and other barriers to international travel to the U.S., common-sense efforts to streamline and encourage international travel should be a primary goal of the Administration. DHS and Congress should therefore:

- **Expand Global Entry reciprocity agreements.** In signing these agreements, the U.S. should look to build on existing partnerships, not only among nations already participating in Global Entry, but also with VWP member countries. In this way, the U.S. and its allies could create a trusted travel superhighway while both enhancing security and facilitating international travel to and from the U.S.
- **Bring new members into the Visa Waiver Program.** Pre-vetted citizens from VWP member nations can travel to the U.S. for up to 90 days visa free. Additionally, member nations must meet higher standards in terms of law enforcement, counterterrorism, border control, document security, and information and data sharing than non-VWP countries. VWP eases the travel burden to the U.S. for members while also enhancing U.S. security. Yet despite these benefits, VWP expansion has been put largely on hold since 2008, with key NATO allies such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia waiting on the sidelines.
- **Reduce visa interview wait times.** Congress should remove the 100 percent visa interview requirement, thereby speeding up interview wait times and allowing consular officers to focus

on individuals who truly pose a risk of crime, terrorism, or overstaying the terms of their visa. Additionally, the Department of State should conduct a pilot program for the processing of non-immigrant visas via secure video conferencing. This would not only allow individuals who live far from a U.S. consulate to meet the visa interview requirement with greater ease, but also allow the U.S. to increase the volume of interviews conducted more easily without needing to augment the number of personnel at any one consulate.

Trusted Travel Superhighway.

To date, trusted travelers have entered the U.S. through the Global Entry program more than 2.6 million times. Helping to ease the burdens of travel for foreign visitors to the U.S. and enhance homeland security, the Global Entry program offers concerted benefits. The U.S. should work with its friends and allies—particularly Visa Waiver Program members—to sign more reciprocity agreements for the program. This would allow the U.S. and its allies to create a trusted travel superhighway, enhancing global travel for U.S. citizens and foreign travelers alike.

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