



**Society of Polish American  
Travel Agents**



June 5, 2013

The Honorable Joe Heck  
132 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley  
1124 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Heck and Quigley:

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for the Jobs Initiated through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act (H.R. 1354), which will increase international travel to the U.S. through much-needed reforms to the U.S. visa application and issuance process, and to thank you for your leadership on this issue.

As you know, increasing international travel in the United States is effective economic stimulus – and it doesn't cost taxpayers a dime. But while global international travel soared between 2001 and 2010, America failed to keep pace. If it had, 78 million more travelers would have visited the country, adding a total of \$606 billion to the U.S. economy that could support more than 467,000 additional U.S. jobs annually over these years.

When tourists travel to and within the United States, they inject new money into the U.S. economy by staying in U.S. hotels, eating at U.S. restaurants, spending in U.S. stores, visiting U.S. attractions, and even utilizing the services of U.S. travel agents. Moreover, overseas business travelers attend dozens of international conferences and trade shows in the U.S., and engage in face-to-face negotiations that yield sales of U.S. commercial goods and services.

Beyond the broader benefits of the JOLT Act, with which you are familiar, we wish to highlight the impact this legislation will have on Poland, a loyal ally of United States for many years. Passage of the JOLT Act would facilitate Poland's entry into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), thereby greatly increasing Polish "inbound" travel to the U.S. (which today is not insubstantial). In 2011, over 110,000 Polish citizens visited the U.S., 34 percent of came for business purposes, 24 percent for tourism and 29 percent to visit friends and families (not surprising, given that the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the number of American citizens of Polish origin at over 9.5 million). While robust, these numbers are down significantly from 2004, a situation which can be rectified through passage of H.R. 1354.

In the past ten years, Poland has experienced many changes, including accession to the European Union's "Schengen Zone," which allowed free tourist traffic throughout Europe. Poles are discovering more and more exotic destinations where visa procedures are less burdensome than in

the U.S. In short, the U.S. is at risk of becoming a less competitive travel choice for Polish visitors – not because it is unattractive as a tourist destination, but rather due to the difficulties caused by the burdensome visa procedures.

Passage of the JOLT Act, on its own or through inclusion in a broader immigration reform package, and the subsequent inclusion of Poland in the VWP would have positive economic, social and cultural impacts for the citizens of both countries. First of all, it would mean an increase in the inbound tourism to the United States, with a subsequent increase in revenue for the U.S. tourist industry, hoteliers and airlines, etc. From a cultural standpoint, it would be a milestone. In the U.S. there are a number of travel agencies specializing in travel from Poland to America, organized under the Society of Polish American Travel Agents. Abolition of visa burdens would not only enhance these entrepreneurs' contribution to the U.S. economy, but would further strengthen the relationship between Polish community in the United States and their compatriots in Poland.

On behalf of the undersigned travel organizations and the many businesses we represent in the U.S. and Poland, we thank you again for your support for the JOLT Act and stand ready to assist in any way possible to see it through to enactment this year.

Sincerely,



Zane Kerby  
President & CEO  
American Society of Travel Agents



Paweł Niewiadomski  
President  
Polska Izba Turystyki (Polish Chamber of Tourism)



Honorata Pierwola  
President  
Soc. of Polish American Travel Agents



Lisa Simon  
President  
NTA (National Tour Association)



Terry Dale  
President  
U.S. Tour Operators Association

CC: The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
The Honorable Mike Lee  
The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
The Honorable Charles Grassley