

March 16, 2020

TO: USTOA Members

FR: Terry Dale

In the wake of the unprecedented challenges facing the travel and tourism industry, there are a number of proposals being discussed at the White House and in Congress to provide assistance to the travel industry and the broader economy. Below is an update from actions over the weekend. These updates will also be uploaded on the [USTOA website](#).

Attached is a copy of a letter sent by USTOA to Steven Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury, last Thursday. USTOA and its representatives in Washington, DC are working diligently to help get much-needed relief for our members, while keeping us apprised of in-the-moment news.

Your voice as a member of USTOA will be heard.

Your elected representatives in Washington, D.C., also need to hear from you during this critical time.

Please take a few minutes out of your day to contact your Members of Congress to ask for relief. Phone calls can be the most effective, but we recognize how busy you are and how high call volumes will be right now. If you can't get through, you can find your Representatives' district offices and email addresses here: [House](#) / [Senate](#).

USTOA will continue to keep you updated throughout this rapidly changing landscape.

Administration

- Over the weekend, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued guidance on social gatherings – the guidance recommends that gatherings should be limited to 50 people or fewer for the next eight weeks. We expect there to be more guidance related to this announcement this week. More information on that guidance can be found [here](#).
- We had a phone call over the weekend with the US Small Business Administration's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center and engaged on the recently enacted Small Business Loan Program.
 - All affected small businesses are eligible.
 - No state has yet received the *Economic Injury Disaster Loan Declaration* required to open up the ability for businesses to apply for assistance.
 - Overview of the program: <https://www.sba.gov/disaster-assistance/coronavirus-covid-19>
 - A description of the three step process to obtain a loan: https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/Documents/Three_Step_Process_SBA_Disaster_Loans.pdf
 - There is helpful information on state websites regarding SBA and other assistance. Please see [Washington State](#) as an example.
- We expect more guidance to be announced this week from the various agencies that will be responsible for managing disaster relief funding.
- As we are sure you all saw, the Federal Reserve cut interest rates to 0%-0.25% over the weekend.
- The Administration expanded the Schengen Area travel restrictions to include the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- The Administration continues to discuss a domestic travel ban, but little clarity on whether or not that will happen has been offered.
- The Administration is considering letting airlines keep a 7.5 percent tax on the price of a ticket as well as other measures to support the industry.

- The Department of Transportation has also waived some regulations, including hours of service rules for truckers hauling medical supplies, gloves and masks, and emergency food.

Congress

- As we shared, the House passed their Coronavirus relief package late Friday night.
- The bill passed with broad, bipartisan support. The Senate is expected to consider the House bill as soon as it considers the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), certain parts of which expire today.
- It is important to note that the House may be introducing and moving a technical corrections package in the near term, which would make technical changes to the bill that passed the House on Friday. This is to address some issues within the bill, including concerns raised by small businesses with some of the underlying provisions.
- The Senate would likely consider the corrected version of the text after they consider FISA.
- There will be a third relief package and discussions on that package are underway now. This package will focus more on industry needs in the way of relief.
- We are consistently engaging key Members and staff to ensure they are considering the appropriate industries that are shouldering the most significant burden as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Loans to airlines and special grants to airports are being considered, similar to those offered after 9/11.

Other News

- Multiple states, including Ohio and Illinois, have announced closures of bars and restaurants and New York City closed its public school system, the largest in the country.
- Work on opening more testing sites for high-risk citizens continued over the weekend. Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Health Brett Giroir, who last week was named the administration's testing czar, stated "the new sites will prioritize health care workers and Americans over 65 who show symptoms of the coronavirus, and be set up first in the hardest-hit locations around the country. Between 2,000 and 4,000 people could be screened per day at the sites once they are fully operational."
- Airports experienced significant wait times over the weekend due to the travel restrictions announced by the Administration, enhanced screening procedures for passengers entering the country, and existing staffing shortages.
- All major cruise lines operating in the US have temporarily suspended operations.
- As of Monday, stock trading had halted in response to the outbreak as well.
- The Federal Government has not yet gone to teleworking, but that may be coming soon.