

Bipartisan tourism initiative expands Visa Waiver Program and creates jobs.

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) applauded the inclusion of the bipartisan Jobs Originating through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act in the Senate’s comprehensive immigration reform package.

“I’m thrilled my colleagues in the Senate recognize the value of the JOLT Act and have made it a priority within comprehensive immigration reform,” **said Rep. Quigley**. “Updating America’s visa travel protocol will increase opportunities for international tourists, create jobs, and drive valuable tourism dollars to cities across the country, including Chicago. Modernizing the Visa Waiver Program specifically will strengthen our national security and enhance relationships with important allies like Poland, who have been denied visa-free travel because of outdated policies.”

Quigley, along with Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV), reintroduced the JOLT Act earlier this year. The bill includes a key provision identical to Quigley’s [Visa Waiver Program Enhanced Security and Reform Act](#), which would allow for expansion of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). [President Obama has formally endorsed](#) expanding the VWP and included comparable [language in his comprehensive immigration reform proposal](#) this year.

The VWP allows citizens of selected countries to travel to the U.S. for 90 days without a U.S. visa. The JOLT Act would update eligibility criteria for applicant countries, requiring a low overstay rate, set at less than three percent of foreign nationals who remain in the United States after their visa expires.



U.S. Travel Association CEO Roger Dow (left) joins Congressmen Mike Quigley (D-IL) and Joe Heck (R-NV) in support of the Jobs Originated through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act.

Expansion of the VWP would increase revenue to the travel industry at a time when America's economy needs it most. According to the U.S. Travel Association (USTA), more than 17 million people visited the U.S. from VWP countries in 2010, spending nearly \$61 billion and supporting 433,000 American jobs. The USTA estimates that if the number of VWP countries were expanded, an additional 602,069 U.S. visitors would generate an additional \$7 billion and support 42,241 American jobs. The measure is supported by the USTA, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the 88 organizations that comprise the Discover America Program (for a full list [click here](#)).

Rep. Quigley has [testified before Congress](#) on the benefits of including Poland and other diplomatic partners in the VWP. Last year, he [traveled to Poland](#) to speak with President Bronisław Komorowski on the issue. Chicago is home to nearly one million citizens of Polish ancestry, the highest concentration of any city outside of Warsaw.

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