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# ASTA Praises Passage of New COVID Relief Bill

TRAVEL AGENT | AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL ADVISORS (ASTA) | JANEEN CHRISTOFF | APRIL 07, 2022



American flag waving in front of the U.S. Capitol. (photo via rarrarorro / iStock / Getty Images Plus)

The American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) is applauding the passage of a new bill designed to provide further aid to small businesses hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Relief for Restaurants and Other Hard Hit Small Businesses Act of 2022 passed the House of Representatives and the Senate will now consider its own legislation.

ASTA praised the House bill for its industry-neutral approach.

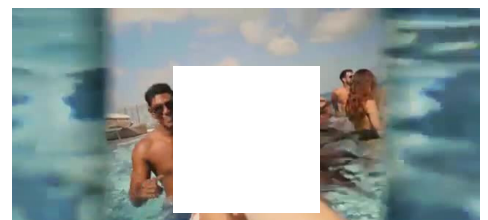
"The travel industry was the first hit by the pandemic and will be one of the last to recover," said Eben Peck, ASTA executive vice president, advocacy. "According to recent ASTA member surveys, the average travel agency revenue levels are still down

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industry-neutral approach to pandemic relief, where the businesses most severely impacted by COVID receive priority in obtaining financial assistance. This bill does exactly that, and we commend House Small Business Committee Chair Velazquez and Rep. Dean Phillips for their support for this comprehensive approach."

Peck noted that the [passage of this bill](#) is "imperative" to travel advisors.

"Given the severity and longevity of the financial losses suffered by travel advisors and other travel-reliant small businesses, passage of this legislation is imperative to getting these businesses back on their feet and contributing to our country's economic recovery," he said. "While it will take several years for the travel agency industry to return to health, we believe this bill, coupled with modifying the CDC's international air travel testing rule, will help speed this recovery and put travel agencies in a position to better serve the traveling public."

Peck urged the Senate to adopt an industry-neutral position in its own version of the bill.

"As the Senate considers its own version of pandemic relief, ASTA strongly urges Senators to adopt a similar industry-neutral approach instead of pursuing legislation where winners and losers are cherry-picked by Congress across the varying sectors affected by the pandemic. Doing so leaves travel advisors (and many other sectors) by the wayside, and the traveling public without the assistance it needs to navigate ever-changing rules and restrictions," Peck concluded.

The bill creates a Hard Hit Industries Awards Program, which will set aside \$13 billion in grants for small businesses across all industries that were the hardest hit by the pandemic but ineligible for relief under either the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) or the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program. The legislation also would provide \$42 billion to replenish the RRF.

In order to receive grant money, businesses must have no more than 200

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legislation passed by the House.

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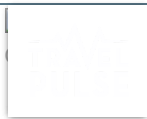
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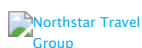
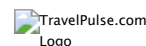
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