

Travel Industry Asking Congress to Provide More Assistance to Travel Agencies

IMPACTING TRAVEL | AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL ADVISORS (ASTA) | DONALD WOOD | FEBRUARY 25, 2021



PHOTO: U.S. Capitol Building. (photo courtesy of trekandshoot/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

A group of 25 travel companies sent a letter to federal legislators representing Florida in Washington D.C. asking for immediate relief for the [travel agency industry](#).

The suggestions from travel agency, consortia, host agency, franchise organization and cruise line executives are in line with relief plans laid out by the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

Part of the letter focuses on the U.S. government issuing grant and loan support for travel agencies, as well as possible actions to mitigate the impact of [Canada closing its ports](#) on the Alaska cruise season.

The ASTA data showed that average travel agency business income was down 82 percent in 2020 as compared to 2019. Even with [economic relief](#) from the government, the average travel agency has laid off close to 60 percent of its staff.

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the impact expanded [travel restrictions](#) have on agencies and their employees. The group believes “financial support for the travel industry has been uneven so far, especially with regard to less visible sectors of the industry like travel agencies.”



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The letter reminds representatives that 98 percent of U.S. travel agencies are small businesses under the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) size standards, with around 66 percent owned and operated by women. Continued losses could force more agencies to shut down forever.

Here are the priorities officials are asking government representatives to consider in any upcoming COVID-19 relief and recovery legislation:

—Create a \$9.3 billion travel agency grant program akin to those created by the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-159) for performing arts venues, movie theaters and museums (\$15 billion) and motorcoach, ferry and private school bus operators (\$2 billion). This amount represents projected second through fourth quarter 2021 revenue loss based on a wide-ranging survey of over 1,500 ASTA members conducted on January 28 and 29, 2021, and is almost certainly conservative.

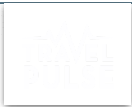
—Expand eligibility in the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program (referenced above) to include attractions, meeting and event organizers and travel agencies who promote, plan and book travel to those attractions and events. Such an expansion would be similar in spirit to the original shuttered venue program, which includes not just venue operators but also promoters, producers and talent representatives.

—Include NAICS Code 5615 (Travel Arrangement and Reservation Services) in the Continuing Appropriations Act’s provision allowing certain businesses to receive a PPP loan of 3.5 times their average monthly payroll versus 2.5 times for other applicants.

—Support any and all efforts to mitigate the impact of the Canadian government’s decision to suspend cruise operations in Canadian waters through February 2022 and to otherwise ensure the cruise industry in Alaska can resume operations as soon as possible.

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