National Travel & Tourism Week

By Dr. Richard Kelley

This past week, many who work in or are connected with Travel & Tourism took a few moments to recognize and salute our industry for all it does not only for the U.S. but for countless other nations around the world.

In the first week of May every year, Travel & Tourism professionals from across the U.S. work together to promote and recognize the strong contributions their travel markets and organizations make to many, many economies. They mark the event in a number of ways, from staging local rallies and conducting media outreach to securing proclamations and resolutions from local government. In fact, National Travel and Tourism Week was established by a congressional resolution in 1983.

Having spent a good portion of my life in this industry, I know first-hand that Travel & Tourism absolutely brings much-needed employment opportunities and economic growth to much of the world. It also brings a vital revenue stream to local governments where funds generated by tourism support health and education initiatives and many, many infrastructure improvements ranging from airports and roads to restoration of beaches, parks and community facilities.

Let’s look at the numbers related to Travel & Tourism in the United States in 2015.

- $2.1 trillion – The economic output generated by domestic and international visitors.
- 15.1 million – The number of jobs supported by Travel & Tourism.
- $148 billion – The tax revenue generated by Travel & Tourism.

To look at it another way, says the U.S. Travel Association, if the U.S. did not have the benefit of today’s Travel & Tourism industry, every U.S. household would pay at least $1,192 more in taxes.

The benefits of Travel & Tourism are felt throughout the economy.

- 84 percent of Travel & Tourism companies are small businesses.
- Many Travel & Tourism jobs are “entry level” positions, which give great opportunities to those just starting their careers.
- There are also thousands of well-paying mid-level
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jobs with many benefits – for example, front desk attendants in hotels, waiters and waitresses in restaurants, sales clerks in shops, and lifeguards on the beach.

• In addition, there are countless opportunities for Travel & Tourism employees to develop advanced skills and work in a wide variety of high-paying, challenging, leading-edge fields, including technology, finance and administration.

Unfortunately, many do not fully understand the importance of Travel & Tourism. They view it as an industry to be heavily taxed and regulated. Some say, “Don't worry. Visitors can't vote.” That is a terrible misconception.

Visitors **can and do vote** – with their wallets and pocketbooks! Long before the next election cycle, visitors can quickly shift their travel plans to areas that are safe, where travel is pleasant and where they are made to feel welcome.

Keep these thoughts in mind as we go forward in the Maldives, Mauritius, Thailand, Fiji, Guam, Hawai'i or wherever Outrigger has a presence. And say it often, say it loud and say it with conviction –

> **Tourism Is Everybody's Business.**