

Summer Work Travel Talking Points

for Congressional meetings and calls

The program

For more than 50 years, the Department of State's Summer Work Travel (SWT) program has supported the success of American diplomacy and of American seasonal businesses. This cultural exchange program provides ~100,000 international university students each year with a 3-4 month opportunity to experience American culture and values during their summer breaks from school.

Summer Work Travel was created through the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Senator William Fulbright's legislation to increase mutual understanding between Americans and the people of other countries. In that legislation, Senator Fulbright saw the need for work-based exchange programs like SWT to reach students and future leaders around the world. When they return home, these students have a clear and personal understanding of American values and people, paving the way for positive diplomatic and economic interactions in the future.

Over 50+ years, Summer Work Travel has become the U.S.' largest student exchange program. It is privately funded and costs nothing to the U.S. taxpayer. In addition to its diplomatic and foreign policy benefits, the program has evolved to provide important economic benefits to U.S. host businesses and seasonal communities.

The issue

As part of the "Buy American and Hire American" Executive Order process, various federal agencies have proposed substantial changes to SWT that could severely damage the program, and ultimately make it unworkable. This would be a significant setback to U.S. national security and diplomacy efforts, and would devastate seasonal communities.

The ask

We are asking the Representative/Senator to call the White House to convey strong support for the J-1 Summer Work Travel international exchange program and to assert that SWT should not be harmed and should continue in its current form.

We are asking House members to sign a letter from Rep. LoBiondo (NJ) supporting the program.

The host employer point of view

I greatly value the Summer Work Travel program because:

SWT brings diversity to our community.

- ▶ The program provides an opportunity for our American staff and patrons to get to know people from around the world. We enjoy hosting these college students — sharing the American way of life with them and learning about their countries and cultures in return.

- ▶ The international students we host are very popular with our guests. The guests love the diversity that this program brings. They love getting to know people from places they've only heard about, but never visited. [*Share specific guest feedback/stories.*]
- ▶ We have had wonderful experiences hosting students from other countries. [*Share specific stories about SWT students, what they learned from you and what you learned from them.*]
- ▶ We enjoy helping our international students discover America and meet Americans. To help connect our students with our neighbors, we host... [*give examples of the cultural events that you arrange for your SWT students*].

SWT is critical for our business.

- ▶ The students who come on the program don't take away American jobs. In fact, SWT students allow us to operate our business at times when American students aren't available for seasonal work, on the shoulder months of the summer and winter peak tourist season. This means that our business stays open longer and we are able to keep our American staff employed earlier and later in the year, and offer more work hours, and higher salaries and benefits. [*Share specific statistics if available, e.g. percentage of revenue loss without SWT students present.*]
- ▶ Our business could not operate without the SWT program. We live in an area with a high percentage of seasonal businesses, where the available American workforce is not sufficient. SWT helps us to keep our doors open.
- ▶ A recent study conducted by the research firm EurekaFacts shows that the SWT program is neither the cause of nor associated with unemployment in the United States. In fact, the program serves to complement the local U.S. labor force and support businesses like ours in tourist areas that are facing labor shortages.

SWT positively contributes to our local economy.

- ▶ International students spend much of what they earn right here in our community, helping to stimulate our local economy. They also pay taxes on their income.

