

**Ben Morgan:** Let me ask you first, what is Brand USA and what is your relationship with Brand USA?

**Chip Rogers:** So, the best way to describe Brand USA for your listener is, it's very similar to what you may know as TravelOK.com, which is the traveling arm that supports the marketing arm that supports travel into the state of Oklahoma. What Brand USA does is really that same thing, but to the rest of the globe. Encouraging people from around the world to come to the United States, vacation in the United States, enjoy our great country, by the way spend a lot of money, and go home and tell your friends how wonderful it is. That's really the sole purpose of Brand USA, and what we've seen since it was created is that it works, and it works really well.

**Morgan:** And so, what makes Brand USA and the attempt to get more money into America from tourism such an important part of the economy in America?

**Rogers:** Well when you look at the numbers you quickly realize that if we don't have international visitors it's only hurting us. It's hurting the U.S. in many ways. If you go back to 2015, the portion of global travel—the market share for the U.S. was 13.7% which means almost 14 out of every one hundred people who traveled around the world came to the U.S. By 2018 that number dropped down to 11.7%, so, some may say “Chip, that's only 2% why does that matter?” Well, that 2% represents 59 billion dollars of activity we missed out on, which would have created about 120,000 jobs. So, we know when people come here, they spend money. The average international visitor spends \$4,000, and when they do that that helps with jobs in the U.S., that helps create businesses in the U.S., expand businesses. And by the way, what most people don't realize, it also helps with our trade deficits. So, we hear a lot on the news about trade deficits. When an international visitor comes to the U.S. and spends their money, that's counted as an export. So international travel to the U.S. very much helps with our trade deficit. And you look at the state of Oklahoma, there is about a thousand hotels in the state of Oklahoma, that create about a hundred thousand jobs. I mean, that's important just to the state of Oklahoma. So, I can't say enough good stuff about Brand USA and visiting our country, but the numbers tell even a better story than I can.

**Morgan:** So, to get to the whole crux of why we're talking today, why is Brand USA at risk, and what will be the negative consequences if it goes away or if it begins losing even more funding?

**Rogers:** Well common sense would ask that exact same question. Why on earth hasn't congress reauthorized Brand USA? This is not a republican issue or a democrat issue, it's frankly a commonsense issue that is a win win win for everybody. So, when we begin asking why doesn't congress do this, sometimes none of us have the answer. But we do know they've absolutely got to do it, and they need to do it soon because the reauthorization ends in 2020. Which means, if it's not reauthorized the program frankly comes to an end. And the way that is funded, by the way so people don't think that this involves taxpayer dollars, is that when a visitor comes to the U.S. that visitor pays an extra fee for their VISA coming into the United States. That fee gets matched, dollar for dollar, by private sector industry here in the United States. And then that pool of money, which is a hundred million dollars, is used to market our country to the rest of the world. So, you have visitors paying the fees, private companies paying the other half, taxpayers are not paying anything, all Congress needs to do is simply reauthorize it. I guess if you watch the news, they're wasting their time on a lot of things that don't matter. It would be really good if all your listeners would call in and ask their members of Congress to spend time on something that does matter, and reauthorizing Brand USA and encouraging people to our country it matters because it helps all of us.

**Morgan:** So, you've already kind of answered my question of how Brand USA can be saved, but what is that number that listeners need to call, and what is something else they can do to stop Brand USA from losing funding, and therefore American jobs being saved.

**Rogers:** Well, they need to call their member of Congress. In the past we have had great support from both the House members and the Senators from the great state of Oklahoma, they've really supported business and they've supported a very strong economy in the U.S., our industry specifically. But we really need global people in Oklahoma to call their member of Congress, then go to their website, TheBrandUSA.com. And all the information is on there, they can arm themselves with all the facts a lot more than even I've spoken about today. That information is available to everybody, but the problem we are running into is it's a timing matter, if you think about it from the private sector side all these companies that are willing and able to match the money—they are creating their budgets for next year. And they don't get to work on the same crazy timeline that Congress gets to work on, they actually have to work on a real timeline with real budgets. And so, they need Congress to reauthorize this so that they can get that money into their budget and be ready to spend this money to market the U.S. to the rest of the world and one other thing I would say that is of interesting note to everyone who hears it. When an international visitor comes to the U.S., their impression, their positive outlook on the U.S. goes up to 70%. What that means is they go home and tell their friends that the U.S. is a great country, and hey don't listen to the news, go to the U.S., enjoy your time there, spend money, they're friendly people, it's a wonderful country. It actually helps with our international relations and kind of our PR around the world.