

Cory Jones (host) : This morning we've got Chip Rogers, he's the president and CEO of American Hotel and Lodging Association. And what Chip's going to talk to us about is Brand USA. Brand USA is a partnership to bring back jobs and tourism, and how we can really strengthen to make the economy boom and get better. I'm going to let Chip take it away, Chip can you tell me a little about yourself and Brand USA?

Chip Rogers: So, I represent the Hotel Industry essentially, the American Hotel and Lodging Association. We're proud to have thousands and thousands of hotels across the country as part of our membership. But what we support as well is what's known as a national marketing effort by Brand USA to the rest of the world. So, when you think about each individual state, they market themselves for people in the U.S. to travel to their state. Well Brand USA is that same thing, but globally. So, we're trying to show the best of the U.S. to the rest of the world. Encourage people to come here because there is enormous benefits when people travel to the United States. Just to give you a couple of statistics: the average global traveler who comes into the U.S. spends about \$4,000 each. That helps with our exports, people don't realize that, but when somebody comes here, when a foreign visitor comes to the U.S. that actually counts as an export, so that helps with our trade imbalance. It creates enormous amounts of jobs, enormous amounts of tax revenue, so it's really a win, win, win for everybody.

Jones: That definitely sounds important, and you know we hear in the media that the economy is strong, that America is a great place to emigrate to and so forth. Can you tell me why haven't those, other than the economic benefits, having that international tourism is really a good thing in light of Brand USA?

Rogers: Well that's a really good point. First of all, beyond as you just mentioned, and I just talked about a moment ago that the economic impact. What we see when people come to the U.S. is that by an enormous margin they go home with a favorable view. I think you want to leave your listeners with that thought, if you don't pick up anything else. If we really want to improve the view of the rest of the world of the United States—have people come here, because we've seen it work time and again. You know, when you're in another country a lot of people look at the U.S. as either New York or Los Angeles. But then, when you get here you realize there are so many special places. Florida, the middle of the mid-west, Indianapolis, Texas, and Chicago. And when visitors come here what we've seen is they really have a thirst to back again and again and again. And when you look at how much the average international visitor spends, it's really good for us. But one of the challenges that we're facing is that the U.S. global market share of international travelers has actually begun to decline. In 2015, we had about 13.7% of global visitors were coming to the U.S. As of last year, 2018, that number dropped down to 11.7%. You may say to yourself, "Well 2%? That's not that big of a deal." Well that 2% represents 59 billion dollars in economic activity and about 120,000 jobs here in the U.S. So, it's good for jobs, it's good for tax revenue, it's good for building businesses and business owners here in the U.S., and again it's great for exporting really the great reputation of the United States.

Jones: Is there anything we can do to help build the brand?

Rogers: Well what we've seen with Brand USA, since it has begun, is that it has really helped stem what would have been further loss. So, we've got to get this passed again by Congress, it's a reauthorization, it's a pretty unique program. It's actually a private public partnership that requires no tax-dollars whatsoever. So, when somebody comes to the U.S. they pay an extra small fee on their VISA to come to the U.S. That money, that's collected by our government, from international visitors coming in, private sector industries here in the U.S. then match it dollar for dollar, up to a hundred million dollars. And

then that hundred million dollars goes to market the U.S. to the rest of the world. So, if you think about it from a taxpayer perspective, it's not costing the U.S. any taxpayer dollars at all, it's just bringing taxpayer dollars in to our country. So, we've got to get Congress to reauthorize it, so I would urge all your listeners when they see your Congressmen, or they can call their Congressmen and say—look this Brand USA thing it's a no-brainer, make sure you support it. And what we've seen is Republicans generally support it, and Democrats generally support it, but we need Congress to take action. They're focused on other things sometimes that don't really matter. This is something that matters and helps everybody.

Jones: Now are American jobs affected by this?

Rogers: Oh, absolutely as I mentioned just that 2% drop was estimated to be 120,000 jobs that we didn't create that would've been created here in the U.S. So, this is a huge job generator and again it kind of makes sense. You want people to come to the U.S., spend their money, enjoy what they experience here, and go home and tell their friends—look, forget what you see on the news this place, the United States is great we had a wonderful time, we are wonderful friendly people, and it's a great idea to go there for vacation.

Jones: Chip where can they go to learn more about Brand USA, and where can they go to learn more so they can make an informed decision?

Rogers: Two places, they can go to AHLA.com, which stands for the American Hotel and Lodging Association, or Brand USA's website TheBrandUSA.com. It has all their information on there. Again, it is rare to find a government program we can call a win win win for everyone, but this is certainly one of them.