



April 28, 2026

Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources

Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources

Honorable Tom Tiffany
Chairman
Federal Lands Subcommittee

Honorable Joe Neguse
Ranking Member
Federal Lands Subcommittee

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, Subcommittee Chairman Tiffany, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Neguse,

We—a coalition of national travel and tourism associations representing hundreds of U.S.-based international inbound and domestic group tour operators, as well as destinations, suppliers, and small businesses across the country—thank you for your continued leadership in supporting America’s national parks and the communities that depend on them. International visitors, many of whom travel through organized group tours, are a critical driver of economic activity in gateway communities, supporting local jobs, small businesses, and year-round tourism economies across multiple states.

We write to respectfully urge the Committee to refrain from advancing provisions within the proposed *Great American Outdoor Act 250 (GAOA 250)* that would codify the recently implemented international visitor surcharge or introduce additional commercial group entrance fees at this time. While we recognize and support the goal of strengthening funding for our national parks, these measures risk further complicating already strained entrance operations during peak travel season.

As we have shared in recent discussions with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and National Park Service (NPS), significant operational challenges remain unresolved. At present, there is no workable mechanism for inbound tour operators to purchase *America the Beautiful (ATB)* passes on behalf of their international clients prior to arrival. We understand this capability will not be available until after Memorial Day, at the earliest. With peak international travel already underway, this delay is creating confusion at park entrances, inconsistent implementation across sites, and growing delays that impact both international and domestic visitors. From an operational and visitor experience standpoint, this gap is not workable.

In addition, the current interpretation limiting the ATB pass to the passholder’s “immediate travel party” (e.g., families or couples) does not translate to the realities of commercial group travel. For organized tours, the “travel party” must be defined as the full group. Any other approach introduces unnecessary administrative burden for park staff, slows entry processing, and creates friction at already congested entrance points.

More fundamentally, the ATB annual pass is not the right vehicle for implementing an international surcharge in a group tour environment. A more effective and operationally sound solution would be a tour-based pass or voucher system that operators can purchase in advance, tied to a specific itinerary or timeframe. This approach would ensure compliance while significantly reducing congestion, improving efficiency, and maintaining a positive visitor experience.

Beyond these operational concerns, the economic consequences are already emerging. Higher fees—particularly for international visitors—are making U.S. tours more difficult to sell globally, with operators reporting that travelers are increasingly choosing alternative destinations with lower total costs. Operators are actively restructuring itineraries, including reducing national park visits, eliminating certain parks or routes, and shifting tours away from U.S. national parks altogether.

As group tour volume declines, the impact extends directly to gateway communities, where reduced visitation means fewer hotel stays, restaurant visits, and local business revenue. At the same time, these fee increases are compounding existing cost pressures—fuel, labor, insurance, and inflation—amplifying their overall impact on tour viability and further constraining the ability of operators to sustain national park itineraries.

We are already seeing early signs of strain at park entrances, and these challenges will only intensify in the coming weeks. Additional legislative action on fees at this stage would add complexity rather than resolve it.

Instead, we respectfully encourage the Committee to urge DOI to prioritize a practical, group tour-specific solution that can be implemented quickly and effectively. With focused direction and collaboration, DOI and NPS can deliver an approach that supports park operations, protects the visitor experience, and preserves the economic contributions of domestic and international travel.

At the same time, we want to underscore our strong support for the bipartisan Senate bill, *The America the Beautiful Act*, introduced in 2025 to reauthorize and expand funding for the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF). This program, established under the 2020 *Great American Outdoors Act* signed into law by President Trump, provides a proven and effective mechanism to address the significant maintenance backlog across America’s public lands without introducing new operational burdens at park entrances.

In closing, we respectfully reiterate our request that the Committee refrain from codifying the international visitor surcharge and introducing additional commercial group entrance fees through GAOA 250. Doing so at this stage will exacerbate operational challenges at park entrances and accelerate the diversion of tours—and their economic benefits—away from national parks and U.S. communities. Instead, we urge the Committee to direct DOI to work with industry to develop and implement a group tour-specific solution that is operationally viable,

efficient for park staff, and workable for the businesses responsible for delivering domestic and international visitors to America's national parks.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and stand ready to work with you and your staff to identify solutions that are both operationally feasible and economically sound.

Respectfully,

Lisa Simon, CEO | Executive Director
International Inbound Travel Association

Catherine Prather, President
National Tour Association

Terry Dale, President & CEO
U.S. Tour Operators Association

Carylann Assante, CEO
Student & Youth Travel Association

Fred Ferguson, President & CEO
American Bus Association

Scott Michael, President & CEO
United Motorcoach Association

Geoff Freeman, President & CEO
U.S. Travel Association

Gustavo Timo, President
Adventure Travel Trade Association

cc: Members of the House Natural Resources Committee