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CONTACT: Lisa Dorfman: 312-522-1165

Lisa.Dorfman@edelman.com

ILLINOIS' TOURISM INDUSTRY APPLAUDS PRESIDENT OBAMA FOR SIGNING TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT

Landmark legislation creates public-private partnership to promote travel to the United States

CHICAGO – The Illinois tourism industry is celebrating the success of four long years of lobbying for a comprehensive plan to market the United States today as President Obama signed into law the U.S. Travel Promotion Act. The Travel Promotion Act seeks to improve travel to the United States and in turn improves nation-wide economic opportunities. Nationwide, action to create this law was spearheaded by U.S. Travel Association President Roger Dow with a strong effort out of Illinois led by Jan Kostner of the Illinois Office of Tourism and the Illinois Convention and Visitor Bureaus.

“By passing the Travel Promotion Act we see not only a win for the nation but specifically for Illinois tourism,” said Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. “The economic impact of international tourism in Illinois means more jobs and greater revenues for the people of this state, and we are encouraged by the potential of this new law in bringing additional visitors to the land of Lincoln.”

Since its inception, the Illinois Office of Tourism has recognized the effect that passing the Travel Promotion Act would have on residents of Illinois. Prior to this Act, the Illinois tourism industry has had significant impact on the state's economy; and in 2008, travel spending in Illinois increased to nearly \$30.8 billionⁱ and created 303,500 new jobs across the state. While economic impact numbers are not expected to grow in the coming yearⁱⁱ, the new law is expected to bolster visitor awareness and increase economic spending in Illinois.

“I want to applaud President Obama and Illinois' Congressional Delegation for their support of the Travel Promotion Act and other efforts to grow and enhance the tourism industry,” said Warren Ribley, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, which houses the Office of Tourism. “Illinois is the Midwest leader in tourism and we look forward to introducing visitors from around the world to our great state.”

As a destination, Illinois ranks highly as the sixth most popular state for overseas visitors and expects long-term growth through the new initiative. The Travel Promotion Act will create the Corporation for Travel Promotion, a private-public partnership to promote the United States as a premier travel destination and better explain travel security policies to foreign travelers with a mission of attracting more visitors to the United States. The Corporation will work closely with the Departments of Commerce, Homeland Security and State to develop a nationally coordinated, multi-channel marketing and communications program to attract more international visitors and explain changing travel security policies. The initiative is funded through a matching program featuring up to \$100 million in private sector contributions and a \$10 fee on foreign travelers who do not pay \$131 for a visa to enter the United States. No money is provided by U.S. taxpayers.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Media materials and downloadable images are now available on the Illinois Office of Tourism's online media center at illinoismediacenter.com.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.

i D.K. Shifflet & Associates

ii U.S. Travel Association

Governor Pat Quinn

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism