



The Honorable Scott Peters
U.S. House of Representatives
2369 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sara Jacobs
U.S. House of Representatives
2348 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Juan Vargas
U.S. House of Representatives
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Darrel Issa
U.S. House of Representatives
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Levin
U.S. House of Representatives
2352 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Impacts of Recent Legislation Increasing Incoming Travel Expenses – San Diego and National Tourism Industry and Economy at Risk.

Dear Congressman Peters, Congressman Jacobs, Congressman Vargas, Congressman Issa, and Congressman Levin:

The undersigned organizations, on behalf of over 2,000 businesses across a variety of industries supporting thousands of local jobs in San Diego, write to express our deep concern over recent legislation that authorizes a significant increase in the fee for the Form I-94 permit—from \$6 to \$30 per person at land border crossings and implements a Visa Integrity Fee on visitors who need nonimmigrant visas. These changes, expected to take effect as early as this month, would impose a disproportionate burden on border communities and negatively affect our local, state, and national economies.

Raising the I-94 fee to \$30 per person—a 400% increase subject to annual inflation adjustments—will deter frequent and casual visits, reduce consumer spending, and disproportionately impact low- and middle-income visitors. Every dollar spent on an immigration processing fee is a dollar not spent in local establishments. At a time when businesses are recovering amid ongoing economic uncertainty, the last thing we need is an avoidable policy shift that restricts cross-border economic flow.

As you know, the land border zone threshold in California which allows international visitors to enter the country without processing an I-94 permit is currently also limited to just 25 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border—an area that does not even encompass the entirety of San Diego County. In contrast, neighboring states such as Arizona and New Mexico enjoy expanded thresholds of 75 miles and 55 miles, respectively. This regulatory disparity places California at a competitive disadvantage. Additionally, under the recent passage of H.R.1, visitors who need a nonimmigrant visa to enter the United States, which includes tourists, business travelers, and international students, must now pay a visa integrity fee of \$250. This fee, when imposed in addition to existing charges, places a greater economic burden on those who contribute to our economic prosperity and global competitiveness. The cost will affect up to seventy-two million visitors per year, despite visitors from a list of countries being eligible for a Visa Waiver Program. Looking forward to major international events hosted in California such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympics, these additional costs put our ability to leverage such events to boost economic growth and attract thousands of visitors that would heavily contribute to local economies not only in California but potentially across the U.S.

In FY2024 alone, California recorded more than 73 million individual land border crossings, most of which were made by international visitors supporting Southern California businesses both large and small. These travelers fuel our local economies by

spending at restaurants, retail outlets, and service providers—and by supporting tourism venues including hotels, convention centers, cultural destinations, and more.

Earlier this year, Visit California projected that the state would have a 9.2% decline on international visits this year alone, therefore experiencing a decline in spending by 4.3%¹. The World Travel and Tourism Council and Oxford Economics found that the U.S. is on track to lose up to \$12.5 billion in international visitor spending in 2024, equivalent to California's entire annual tourism tax revenue². These significant declines underscore the critical importance of maintaining policies that facilitate international travel and economic exchange, especially for regions like San Diego where tourism plays a major economic driver and serves as San Diego's number one service export.

Modernizing I-94 permit specifications and processing would, alternatively, facilitate travel. Even though the I-94 application process is largely digital, travelers must still appear in person at a land port of entry to activate their permit. This requirement pulls U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers away from their core responsibilities—such as detecting illicit activity and maintaining border security—and redirects them toward administrative processing that could be reduced or eliminated with smarter policy design. Streamlining this process would ease the burden on both CBP resources and cross-border travelers, while also supporting economic recovery and strengthening the flow of international visitors who are vital to our tourism economy.

In conclusion, the undersigned organizations strongly oppose these fee increases and urge your office to support and champion the following actions:

- **Maintain the current I-94 permit fee at a low cost** to preserve cross-border commerce and mobility.
- **Expand the 25-mile border zone threshold in California** to 150 miles to include Orange County.
- **Modernize the I-94 activation process** to reduce administrative burdens on CBP and better reflect regional travel patterns.
- **Eliminate or Reduce the Visa Integrity Fee** and ensure its implementation does not detract international visitors vital to our U.S. tourism industry and local communities.

We appreciate your continued leadership on cross-border issues and urge you to champion these priorities with the Administration and other members of Congress to advocate for solutions that strengthen—not hinder—economic growth across the United States and our border region.

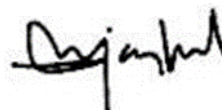
Sincerely,



Chris Cate
President & CEO
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce



Joaquin Luken
Executive Director
Smart Border Coalition



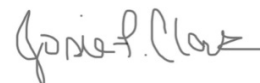
Alejandra Mier y Terán
Executive Director
Otay Chamber of Commerce



Mark Cafferty
President & CEO
San Diego Regional EDC



Jim O'Callaghan
President & CEO
South County EDC



Josie Flores-Clark
President
San Diego County Hispanic
Chamber of Commerce

¹ Visitation and Spending Forecast, Visit California <https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/reports/travel-forecast>

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emesemaczko/2025/06/12/us-is-about-to-lose-125b-californias-entire-tourism-tax-revenue/>