

The NATO Board of Directors unanimously passed the following resolution in support of a National Visitor Center in Washington, D.C. In part, the resolution reads:

Whereas it is a matter of national policy to encourage greater knowledge of the benefits of travel within the United States as expressed by the Congress and by the establishment of the Discover America program; and

Whereas it is in the national interest to provide services and information in the Nation's Capital about the fifty States;

Therefore, the Board of Directors of the National Association of Travel Organizations supports the concept of a National Visitor Center in Washington, D.C. as a vital service to the traveling public, and offers its assistance in the establishment of such a center, and counsel in its operation.

The degree to which a National Visitor Center could make a visit more meaningful to the Nation's Capital and to our States can be appreciated if we each let our mind go back to our first exposure to the visitor center maintained at colonial Williamsburg, Va. Viewing the film there sets the mood and meaning for us as we tour to witness history remade in this splendidly restored city.

NATO finds acceptable the proposals for the National Visitor Center to be located in Union Station as outlined in H.R. 12603. Both H.R. 14604 and S. 3031 of 1966 called for:

1. " * * * exhibits and displays by the individual states * * * " and
2. " * * * specialized information and assistance to foreign visitors to facilitate and encourage their travel throughout the United States."

We believe the Union Station site could provide the necessary space for States to present their stories, if not individually, then perhaps on a regional basis, such as NATO has delineated for the United States.

Union Station could bring under one roof all methods of transportation. Since about 85 percent of the tourists come by car, the parking facility outlined in H.R. 12603 is vitally necessary.

H.R. 12603 has the strength in it which made America great. It proposes a working relationship between government and industry in creating a National Visitor Center. Such a center will not only benefit Americans, but foreign visitors as well.

NATO respectfully recommends, due to its members' vast experience in the U.S. travel business, that it be officially included in such a working coalition, at least in an advisory capacity. Further, NATO is prepared to discuss at the appropriate time the matter of staffing and operation of the National Visitor Center.

The National Association of Travel Organizations pledges its support to these goals.

Thank you.

Mr. GRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Toohey. That is a very fine statement and I am sure if this legislation is enacted and the National Park Service is given the responsibility for operating the National Visitor Center, they will welcome advice from the National Association of Travel Organizations. Although the National Park Service has had years of experience in dealing with visitors, this is a unique project so I am sure they will welcome your counsel and advice.

You touched on something I mentioned briefly in my opening statement, and that is that last year it was estimated the visitors to the District of Columbia spent \$400 million, and much of that went to help the tax base of the District of Columbia. At the present time the Federal Government is paying to the District of Columbia in lieu