



Skål International U.S.A.

Joins Team of National Tourism Advocates

Washington – A delegation of tourism leaders representing Skål International USA joined with other travel industry advocates to promote key issues facing the growth and health of one of America’s economic engines at Destination Capitol Hill, organized by the U. S. Travel Association. “Moving forward to be more proactive on national issues after receiving feedback from our own membership is the right path,” said Skål International USA President Burcin Turkkan, a member of the Skål Club of Atlanta. “We are working hard on being advocates for our tourism issues and working with others in the industry on a national level increases our visibility and relevance. Skål in the United States wants to be with the big players in tourism. Our participation at Destination Capitol Hill accomplished this, although it is just a start.”

Turkkan led a group of United States Skålleagues, including Club Presidents Jack Wert of Southwest Florida, Andres Hayes of Washington DC, Donetta Poisson of Atlanta, GA as well as Skål International USA Director of Public Relations and Communications Steve Richer, also of Washington, DC.



In her effort to strengthen ties with national tourism organizations, Turkkan met with key Destination Capitol Hill leaders, including U. S. Travel President Roger Dow, Brand USA President Chris Thompson, Destinations International Vice President Jack Johnson, and National Tour Association President Pam Inman, all of whom are members of Skål International USA. All “Skålleagues”, except Thompson, participated in Capitol Hill activities, which focused on meeting with Senators and Representatives or their staffs on major tourism issues. Thompson is excluded from lobbying on any issues, as his organization is a creation of federal legislation and such activity is forbidden. Brand USA does, however, provide statistical information on international visitor trends and economic impact in conjunction with the

National Travel and Tourism Office in the U. S. Department of Commerce, which helps private sector advocates make their case.

The key advocacy points for all of these tourism industry leaders were the continuation and guaranteed funding of Brand USA, the international marketing arm of the United States; funding for the national transportation infrastructure backlog, especially to modernize airports and maintain highways, bridges, and tunnels; allow “open skies” to provide air access to the United States beyond the amount of flights that the three legacy carriers can provide from around the world; addressing the almost \$7 billion in infrastructure backlog in our national parks; and expanding the visa waiver program to allow additional visitors from countries with low overstay rates, such as Poland, Israel, and Brazil, to travel to America without having to obtain a visa.



“These issues were important ones to discuss on my first visits ever to Capitol Hill,” said Turkkkan. “They provided a basis to elaborate further and cite the top positions for Skål International USA, which are freedom to travel with security and the preservation and protection of national cultural, historic, and environmental tourism sites. I really had a first-class experience!” she said. “Among the highlights were meeting members of our delegation from Georgia, including Congressman Barry Loudermilk and Congressman John Lewis, a hero of the civil rights movement. I was able to even give both Congressmen one of our Skål USA President souvenir banners. Being on Capitol Hill in these discussions is a highlight of the year so far. It is a place where Skål belongs.”

Skål International USA is currently the largest National Committee in Skål International with 2,000 members and 49 clubs nationwide.

For more information on SKÅL International and SKÅL USA, and to find out more about membership, go to www.skalusa.org