
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

URGING THE INCLUSION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE
VISA WAIVER PROGRAM.

1 WHEREAS, tourism is Hawaii's largest single source of
2 private capital, creating \$1,300,000,000 in state tax revenues
3 annually and providing one-hundred forty-five thousand jobs
4 statewide; and

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6 WHEREAS, diversifying Hawaii's tourism industry to
7 accommodate a substantial Chinese market-base will develop a
8 broader foundation for the tourism industry in Hawaii as a
9 whole; and

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11 WHEREAS, the world's second largest economy, the People's
12 Republic of China is now a major trade partner with the United
13 States, a force for stability and peace in Asia, and a world
14 leader in the auto market and the world's largest producer of
15 energy; and

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17 WHEREAS, the People's Republic of China has 1.3 billion
18 people, representing a very large and lucrative pool of
19 visitors; and

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21 WHEREAS, Hawaii has a long and noteworthy history with the
22 People's Republic of China, the origin of Hawaii's first sugar
23 plantation laborers and of a past Chinese president who was
24 educated in Hawaii; and

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26 WHEREAS, according to the Department of State, the United
27 States government processed more than one million visas for
28 Chinese applicants during fiscal year 2011; and



1 WHEREAS, the United States is in competition with other
2 countries for tourism business from the People's Republic of
3 China, with Canada recently granting the People's Republic of
4 China a ten year visa and France having a more efficient visa
5 process for Chinese travelers, thereby capturing eighteen
6 percent more visitors last year; and

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8 WHEREAS, although certain travel restrictions are
9 reasonable, especially in light of the continuing threat of
10 terrorism, other restrictions not only are illogical but also
11 hurt states like Hawaii that depend heavily on the visitor
12 industry; and

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14 WHEREAS, the tourism industry remains the backbone of
15 Hawaii's economy, and any restriction that impedes visitors'
16 access to Hawaii correspondingly hurts the economy, and Chinese
17 travelers cite the expense and difficulty of obtaining a visa as
18 one of the key reasons for deciding to travel to countries other
19 than the United States; and

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21 WHEREAS, one solution to ease this problem is for a country
22 to be admitted to the Department of State's Visa Waiver Program,
23 which allows nationals from foreign countries to enter the
24 United States for tourism or business-related purposes for as
25 long as ninety days without obtaining a visa; and

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27 WHEREAS, members of Hawaii's business and government
28 communities welcomed two hundred seventy-one passengers at
29 Honolulu International Airport from China Eastern Airlines'
30 inaugural direct flight from Shanghai in August 2011; and

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32 WHEREAS, the average Chinese tourist to Hawaii spends about
33 \$368 per day, compared to \$275 daily for a Japanese tourist and
34 \$178 per day for all tourists to Hawaii; and

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36 WHEREAS, the United States Senate advanced legislation that
37 would add twenty new consular officers and other measures that
38 would expedite visa processing in the People's Republic of
39 China; and

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41 WHEREAS, in order for a country to qualify for the Visa
42 Waiver Program, the country must satisfy certain conditions,
43 with the United States government retaining the ultimate
44 discretion to admit the country to the program; and



1 WHEREAS, one condition for entry into the waiver program is
2 the rate of refusal of a country's visa applicants which must be
3 three percent or lower; and

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5 WHEREAS, the refusal rate for Chinese visa applicants was
6 13.3 percent as of last year; and

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8 WHEREAS, the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board recommended
9 that easing visa restrictions and the visa application and
10 approval process should include:

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- 12 (1) Raising the visa refusal rate from three to ten
- 13 percent;
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- 15 (2) Establishing a maximum wait time for in-person visa
- 16 interviews of five days;
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- 18 (3) Adding four to six visa processing locations and
- 19 several hundred consulate officers to process visas;
- 20 and
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- 22 (4) Allowing non-immigrant visas to last ten years for
- 23 Chinese visitors, which is permitted in other
- 24 countries; and
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26 WHEREAS, both Japan and South Korea qualify for visa
27 waivers; and

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29 WHEREAS, when South Korea became one of the thirty-six
30 countries in the Department of State's Visa Waiver Program in
31 November of 2008, it boosted tourism to Hawaii from that
32 country; now, therefore,

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34 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
35 Twenty-sixth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
36 of 2012, the Senate concurring, that the Department of State,
37 the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of
38 Justice are urged to include the People's Republic of China in
39 the Visa Waiver Program and to support the recommendations of
40 the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board to ease visa restrictions
41 and the visa application and approval process for business and
42 tourist travelers from the People's Republic of China; and



1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
2 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Secretary of State,
3 the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the United States
4 Attorney General.

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OFFERED BY: Tom Bunn

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