

Counterterrorism Partnership Act (S.497/H.R. 959). The Administration strongly supports this effort and regards this bill as an opportunity to expand the substantial security, political, and economic benefits of a program that has been developed and strengthened now over the span of a quarter of a century. In DHS's view, passage of the bill, with some suggested technical modifications that have been proposed by the Administration to the bill's sponsors, would update VWP designation requirements, protect U.S. immigration interests, and expand the pool of eligible countries to several strong candidates that have demonstrated a commitment to security cooperation with the United States. Moreover, the bill will retain all the enhanced security and information sharing requirements introduced by the 9/11 Act.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me reiterate the valuable contribution of the VWP to our national security. The VWP is a vital part of a robust travel security system for many reasons: the ESTA requirement; the mandatory bilateral information sharing agreements regarding potential terrorists and criminals; the sharing of LASP data; the inspections of VWP countries' aviation, border control, and travel document security standards; and the vigorous, ongoing monitoring of changing conditions in VWP countries. Thus, expansion of the program not only provides economic benefits to our country, it will also contribute positively to our national security and strengthen our international partnerships.

Chairman Gallegly, Ranking Member Lofgren and other distinguished Members, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration of this important topic.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.