

# 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

## PROTECTING & ENHANCING The Independent Distribution of Travel



# MISSION



To be the recognized voice and global leader in advocating for policies that support and enhance the ability for travel technology providers to connect consumers and travel suppliers, eliminate barriers to travel, and safeguard consumer choice.

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## Influencing Policy at all Levels of Government



For Travel Tech, 2016 was a year marked by great progress and great opportunities for the association, the industry and our members. At the close of my third year with the Association, I am confident that we are making a difference for the industry on many fronts.

We continue to fight for transparency of travel information and for increased competition among travel suppliers. These policy principles manifest in varying formats, from municipal short term rental policies to federal policies relating to air travel. Whether in the local, state, federal or international arenas, Travel Tech has played an integral role in shaping the public policy discussion.

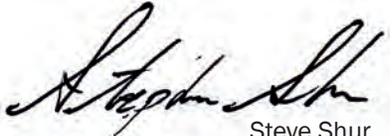
Specifically, Travel Tech has led the charge on promoting competition in air travel on Capitol Hill by engaging Congress on important issues such as consolidation, anti-trust immune alliances and Open Skies agreements. On behalf of a truly transparent and competitive marketplace for consumers, Travel Tech was the leading voice at the Department of Transportation on issues of consumers' access to fare and schedule information and ability to see and transact core ancillary services in air travel such as seat selection and baggage fees.

On the hotel front, Travel Tech worked to dispel harmful and unfounded claims made by the hotel industry against third party booking sites, an effort meant to scare consumers into only booking rooms on the hotels' own websites.

At the state level, Travel Tech continues to defeat legislation that would burden third party booking platforms and consumers with additional taxes. And for our short term rental platform members, we are seeing increasing interest from state lawmakers in statewide standards legislation that would establish a regulatory framework for short term rentals, a response to the ever growing demand for short term rentals throughout the U.S. and around the world. While states contemplate new laws and regulations for short term rentals, Travel Tech continues to engage with municipal policymakers across the nation to provide insight and support for reasonable and practical solutions for short term rental policies.

Travel Tech also has taken a leadership role in the development of new industry standards for air travel distribution and settlement systems. In concert with the European Technology and Travel Services Association (ET TSA), the Distribution Industry Standards Working Group was formed as a means to streamline communications with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) on issues related to industry standards development.

Travel Tech looks forward to working with the new Congress, the new Administration and with state and municipal policymakers throughout the country in 2017.



Steve Shur  
President

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### Our Goal to Step Up and Speak Out is Coming to Fruition



In the world of policy advocacy, nothing matters more than a seat at the table. As an industry, it is critical for travel technology providers to be involved in positively influencing policy conversations at all levels of government. Laws, regulations, and guidance will develop with or without us. If we are not involved, we allow others to frame our issues and shape their resolution.

When we expanded the scope of Travel Tech, we were choosing to claim that seat. As evidenced by the numerous issues we have pursued and influenced this past year, that goal is coming to fruition. We are regularly interacting with a broad group of Members on Capitol Hill and working closely with federal agencies; we are taking the lead on industry standards and battling tax and short-term rental issues at the state and local levels.

Our dedication to Travel Tech's principles of competition, transparency and consumer choice will be more important than ever in the new Administration. We have a new group of policymakers at all levels of government, from the White House, to Capitol Hill, to the political staff at the Department of Transportation, the Commerce Department and the Federal Trade Commission. It is critical that we tell our story and effectively advocate for public policy that enhances the independent distribution of travel. I'm confident the Travel Tech team is up to the task.

Bruce Charendoff  
Senior Vice President  
Government & External Affairs  
Sabre

## STAFF



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**Michael Liptak**  
VP of Federal Relations



**Matthew Kiessler**  
VP of Short-term  
Rental Policy



**Emily Cullum**  
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Communications

# AREAS OF OUR INVOLVEMENT

Travel Tech is the voice of the travel technology industry, advocating for public policy that promotes transparency and competition in the marketplace to encourage innovation and preserve consumer choice. Guided by these principals, we covered the following issues in 2016:

- FAA Reauthorization
  - National Commission to Study Air Competition
  - Families Flying Together Act
  - Transparent Airfares Act
  - Advisory Committee for Aviation Consumer Protection
  - Airline Ancillary Fees
- Stop Online Booking Scams (SOBS) Act
- House Appropriations – FTC study
- Passenger Protections III Proposed Rulemaking
- FTC / Mandatory Resort Fees
- U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce & Trade
- Norwegian Air International
- Consumer Review Freedom Act
- Cuba Travel
- Consumers' Access to Fare and Schedule Information
- Taxation of Travel Agent Service Fees
- Short Term Rental Regulations and Taxation
- Industry Standards Development



# AIR TRAVEL POLICY ISSUES

## National Commission to Study Air Competition

- Promoted the establishment of a national commission to examine the state of competition in commercial aviation.

## Families Flying Together Act

- Worked with Congress to ensure that the well-intentioned goal of guaranteeing that families can sit together on planes did not unnecessarily burden ticket agents who have no control over airplane seating maps.

## Transparent Airfares Act

- Opposed the Transparent Airfares Act, which would allow airlines to deceive consumers by prominently marketing the base fare while obscuring the actual cost of the ticket. Travel Tech supports true transparency. Consumers deserve to know the full cost of a ticket at the time of shopping and booking.

## Advisory Committee for Aviation Consumer Protection

- Supported the reauthorization of the committee which explores important consumer protection issues in air travel.

## Airline Ancillary Fees

- Continued to press the Department of Transportation to publish a rule that would ensure that consumers have access to seating and baggage fees while shopping for flights on third party websites and through travel agencies.

## Passenger Protections III Proposed Rulemaking

- Filed several supplemental comments relating to key provisions in the pending rule related to ticket agent requirements, ancillary fees and transparency of fare and schedule information.

## Norwegian Air International (NAI)

- Filed comments in support of NAI's petition for a permit to provide air service to the U.S. NAI was granted approval in December 2016 which means more choices for consumers traveling between the U.S and Europe.

## Cuba Travel

- Tracked, monitored and engaged with the Treasury Department on policy related to travel to Cuba.

## Consumers' Access to Fare and Schedule Information

- Worked with Congress and the Department of Transportation to highlight the need to address actions by airlines that restrict consumers' access to publicly available air fare and schedule information. The DOT issued a Request for Information on this topic.



# HOTEL ISSUES

## Stop Online Booking Scams (SOBS) Act

- Opposed the SOBS Act in Congress, which is based on unfounded claims that consumers are being harmed by third party booking sites at alarming rates. Congress saw this campaign by the hotel lobby for what it was, a PR stunt to scare consumers into booking directly with hotels, and rejected it.

## Hotel Mandatory Resort Fees

- Travel Tech was invited by the Federal Trade Commission to discuss our industry's perspective on hotels' practice of imposing mandatory resort fees. The FTC has not acted on resort fees to date but have indicated their intent to address what they believe is a deceptive practice.

## State Taxation of Travel Agent Fees on Hotel Bookings

- Several state legislatures have considered enacting new laws that would tax the service fees of travel agents, both online and in the community. Most states that considered this measure rejected it. In the instances where these new and burdensome taxes on travel agents were enacted, consumers are subject to higher costs than in states where travel agent fees are not taxed.



# SHORT TERM RENTAL REGULATIONS

Travel Tech directly engaged policymakers in target cities and states through letters, meetings, calls and public statements of support or opposition:

## 10 States:

- Arizona
- Hawaii
- Louisiana
- Massachusetts
- Missouri
- New York
- Tennessee
- Utah
- Virginia
- Wisconsin

## 20 Municipalities:

- Anaheim
- Austin
- Chicago
- Denver
- Fort Lauderdale
- Hermosa Beach
- Hood River
- Kansas City
- Laguna Beach
- Los Angeles
- Maui
- Memphis
- Monterey
- New Orleans
- Palm Springs
- Raleigh
- San Clemente
- San Francisco
- Seattle
- Tacoma

Travel Tech expanded its thought leadership presence, speaking about short term rentals and reasonable regulations with the National Restaurant Association, American Legislative Exchange Council, National Association of Realtors, International Municipal Lawyers Association, State Policy Network, Institute for Policy Innovation, Americans for Tax Reform, Vacation Rental Managers Association, and more.



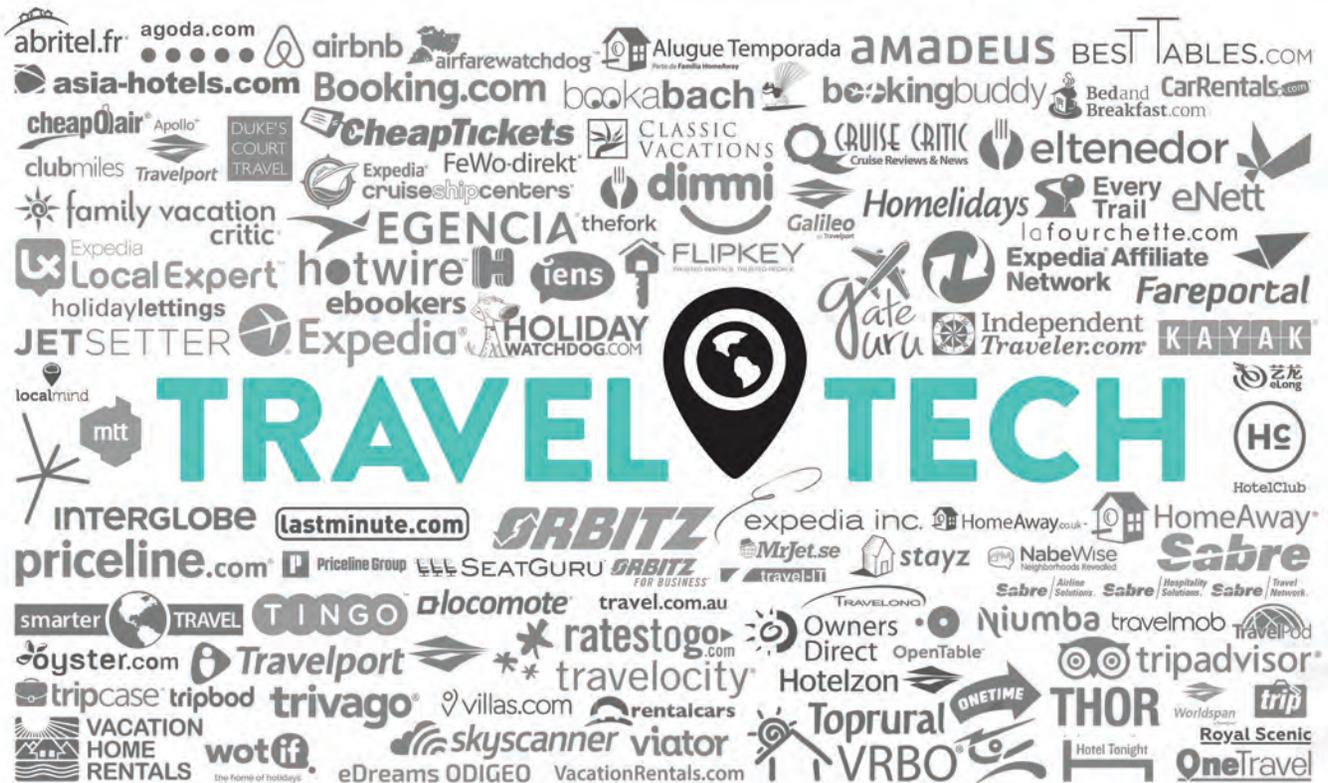
# VISIBILITY FOR TRAVEL TECH

Travel Tech grew its media presence in 2016, pitching and participating in dozens of print, television and radio stories on a series of policy issues in major news outlets, including The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, POLITICO, The Hill and Reuters, numerous city business journals, and travel trade publications such as Skift, Travel Weekly and Tnooz. Reporters are beginning to turn to Travel Tech for industry insight on air travel policy, online travel agency and metasearch issues, short term rentals and independent distribution standards. By reacting publicly to key federal and state initiatives, we ensure that our perspective is heard outside of backroom policy meetings and makes its way to the public.

Similarly, we expanded our presence at industry and thought leadership events, speaking about the value of competition, transparency, and independent distribution in front of IATA, ICAO, ASTA, The American Antitrust Institute, the Georgetown Law Hotel & Lodging Legal Summit, and more.



# THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS







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