

KATHY CASTOR
11TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND
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March 18, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama, President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Inclusion of Brazil and Chile in Visa Waiver Program

Dear President Obama,

I applaud your upcoming trip to South America and the opportunities for improved relations with countries like Brazil and Chile and economic growth for our country. I strongly encourage you to use your visit to announce inclusion of Brazil and Chile in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP).

As reported recently by the U.S. Travel Association, Brazilian visitors spend on average \$5,114 per person in the U.S., the highest spending among the top-10 countries with the most visitations to the U.S., and Chilean travelers spent an average of \$4,600 during U.S. trips in 2009. This directly generates a total of \$580 million in U.S. exports, and supports 5,300 U.S. jobs. These are substantial numbers for the overall health of the U.S. economy.

With an inclusion of Brazil and Chile in the VWP, the U.S. will be able to champion a strong South American partnership while also benefiting the U.S. tourism economy. All of South America, the European Union, Russia and New Zealand provide Brazilian and Chilean citizens visa-free privileges for short-term tourism visits. The lack of inclusion of Brazil and Chile in the VWP places the U.S. at a distinct disadvantage. I urge you to address the Visa Waiver Program, to help Florida's struggling tourism industry and create jobs for our community.

By easing visa restrictions for Brazilian and Chileans, it is likely that Florida could double South American tourism. This would translate to \$10.3 billion in real spending to the industry while directly supporting 95,100 American jobs. I have heard from Busch Gardens in my district that tourists from Brazil are some of their best customers, yet often choose to travel to other locations due to delays with the visa process.

Again, I applaud your trip to South America and the increase in jobs and economic opportunity it represents. I would urge you to add the issue of increased tourism to your agenda and the shot in the arm to Florida's economy it might represent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy Castor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Castor
US Representative
Florida District-11