



American Society of
Travel Advisors



ASTA 2021-2022 ADVOCACY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ASTA fights to protect the interests of its members and the broader travel agency community at all levels of government—federal, state and even local. This work, always critical but never more important than during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, is advanced by the volunteer efforts of the Society's members and is overseen by the ASTA Government & Political Affairs Committee and its Co-Chairs Jennifer Wilson-Buttigieg and Chris Seddelmeyer. Over the last decade, ASTA's efforts led to legislative and regulatory victories that saved the travel advisor industry an estimated \$720 million in new taxes, fees and other costs.

Major Federal Advocacy Achievements 2021-2022

- Along with airlines and other aviation stakeholders, successfully pressured the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to abandon a January 2021 proposal to require a negative COVID-19 test to board domestic flights.
- As part of the 2021 American Rescue Plan, ASTA successfully worked to extend the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) through 2021 and unemployment insurance for independent contractors through Labor Day. State and local governments also received funds to support travel and tourism businesses. According to member surveys, 78 percent of ASTA's members received relief under at least one of the federal programs established during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Just days after ASTA's 2021 Legislative Day, the Alaska Tourism Restoration Act (S. 593/H.R. 1318) passed the U.S. Senate and was signed into law. The bill, strongly advocated for by ASTA members, allowed for a portion of the 2021 Alaska cruise season to go forward by creating a temporary, targeted waiver from U.S. law by deeming certain roundtrip voyages between Alaska and Washington State as foreign voyages.
- Successfully enjoined the State of Florida's lawsuit against the CDC continuing to enforce its Conditional Sailing Order (CSO). Under the most recent ruling, the CSO turned into a non-binding "recommendation" as of mid-July 2021, which put the cruise industry on equal footing with the treatment accorded to businesses in similarly-situated industries and allowed the cruise recovery to begin in earnest.
- Up against the powerful lobbying efforts of business groups seeking targeted, industry-specific grants, ASTA successfully advocated for House of Representatives passage of a small business COVID relief bill in April 2022 that would have provided assistance based on need and demonstrated revenue loss. Unfortunately, the effort stalled in the Senate.
- After a months long, multi-layered ASTA advocacy campaign, the Biden administration rescinded its requirement for travelers to

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test negative for COVID-19 before entering the U.S. (the inbound testing rule) in June 2022. The Society's advocacy campaign on the issue featured over 100 congressional meetings, nearly 4,000 grassroots emails to the Administration, over 7,400 letters to the editor, and multiple ASTA and coalition letters to Administration officials.

- After an all-out push by ASTA, Congress included the Travel and Tourism Omnibus Act in a 2022 year-end package. The legislation was one of two ASTA Legislative Day priorities, and among other things, creates an Assistant Secretary of Travel and Tourism at the U.S. Department of Commerce, elevating the importance the U.S. travel industry plays at home and abroad.

Major State Achievements 2021-2022

- Led a 50-state grassroots campaign to ensure that travel agencies were eligible for state and local small business grant programs funded by the American Rescue Plan in 2021, which resulted in grant programs ASTA members accessed in California, Maine, Missouri, Texas and other states.
- Working in coordination with local members and chapters, ASTA successfully opposed a 2021 Texas proposal to apply the state's six percent hotel tax to travel agency service fees/markups connected to in-state hotel bookings.
- In 2022, working with local members, ASTA secured an 11th-hour exemption for travel agencies in a Kentucky bill to expand the Commonwealth's six percent sales taxes to a range of service industries, saving advisors there close to \$2 million a year collectively in new taxes.

Other Major Achievements in 2021-2022

- Over the course of 2021 and 2022, ASTA members contributed more than \$318,000 to ASTA's political action committee. As a result, ASTAPAC was able to support the campaigns of 63 candidates for Congress, spending \$262,000 to successfully reelect 59 of that number.
- Over the course of 2021 and 2022, ASTA members, member companies and suppliers contributed more than \$1.2 million to ASTA's Advocacy Fund in support of the association's advocacy goals. The accomplishments here would not have been possible without this generous support.
- During ASTA's eighth annual Legislative Day in May 2021, over 170 ASTA members met virtually with their representatives in the U.S. House and Senate to discuss legislative priorities affecting the industry, including the SAVE Act, Alaska cruising and travel tax incentives.
- We executed the largest Legislative Day in ASTA history in 2022, with 216 attendees from 43 states conducting 196 congressional meetings, 45 of which were with the Members of Congress themselves, all records. The hard work paid off, as one of our legislative priorities saw a spike in cosponsors immediately following the event and the other was signed into law at the end of the year.
- Over the last two years, ASTA members and staff held over 700 meetings with members of Congress and their staff, participated in nearly 25 different federal and state grassroots campaigns culminating in almost 90,000 messages to legislators, and sent more than 9,500 letters to editors of local and national newspapers.

For more information about ASTA's advocacy efforts, please contact govtaffairs@asta.org or visit [asta.org/advocacy](https://www.asta.org/advocacy)

