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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHAT DOES THE TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT MEAN FOR CHARLOTTE?

New act recently signed by Obama to encourage international travel

CHARLOTTE, NC – (March 8, 2010) – The travel and tourism industry is set to get a boost this year thanks to President Obama's support of the Travel Promotion Act, which he signed into law today. An important step towards increasing international travel to the United States, the act is expected to create 40,000 new jobs throughout the country and spur economic growth by attracting 1.6 million additional international travelers to the U.S., along with \$4 billion in new spending.

"This is a terrific achievement for the hospitality industry that's been needed for quite some time," says Visit Charlotte Executive Director Mike Butts. "This legislation is essential as more and more assets come on board throughout the Charlotte region and as we grow the destination to attract more visitors, and ultimately dollars, to our city."

Answers to some frequently asked questions will help give a better understanding of this program and its effects on Charlotte and surrounding areas.

What is the Travel Promotion Act (TPA)?

The Act is a program designed to increase international travel to all parts of the United States. The TPA is required to promote all 50 states, including areas not traditionally visited by international travelers. Research shows that the U.S. welcomed 2.4 million fewer overseas visitors in 2009 than in 2000, costing the economy billions of dollars in potential spending. President Obama's support of this act reflects the importance of travel and tourism to our economy and an effort to improve these numbers.

Why is the TPA important to Charlotte and surrounding areas?

American travelers have decreased the length of their visits and have started traveling closer to home in response to challenging economic times. International visitors generally take longer trips and would benefit our local economy by increasing visitor spending and room nights sold. The importance of this industry is clear with more than 50,000 Charlotte citizens employed by the tourism and hospitality industry, the second leading industry in North Carolina, with visitors spending nearly four billion dollars in Charlotte alone last year. An increase in overseas visitors would help to counteract the shrinking budgets of national travelers and the expected 3.5% drop off in U.S. domestic leisure travel in 2009, while simultaneously increasing international exposure for all that Charlotte has to offer.

Travel Promotion Act Release (continued)

How will this act be funded?

Funding for the TPA will be through a combination of private sector and governmental support. In the first year of operation, funds will be generated by a nominal \$10 travel promotion fee paid by international visitors traveling from Visa Waiver Program countries. In year two, a 2-to-1 match for the travel industry's contribution will be supplied by the government, with a 1-to-1 match in subsequent years. No money is provided by U.S. taxpayers.

When can we expect to see the effects of this Act?

An Executive Director will be appointed later this year, following the selection of a board of directors representing seven sectors of the travel industry to complete formation of the entity. Direct effects may take some time to be seen, but expect a positive effect on the number of passengers from the 29 international destinations Charlotte-Douglas International Airport already serves and from Rome and Sao Paulo when these routes are added later this year.

The passage of the Travel Promotion Act and formation of the Corporation for Travel Promotion is an exciting development for travel and tourism in the U.S. Look forward to sharing everything Charlotte has to offer with many more international visitors in the years to come.

With an organization-wide vision of Southern hospitality and world-class customer service, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA) seeks to ensure that the visitors and events that come to the area have a positive experience. Our responsibilities include destination marketing through Visit Charlotte and management/operations responsibilities for the Charlotte Convention Center, Time Warner Cable Arena, Ovens Auditorium, Bojangles' Coliseum, and the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Guided by three main mission objectives, the CRVA markets by bringing visitors and events to the Charlotte region, manages by making the visitors' experiences positive and the events successful, and maximizes by marketing and managing in a way that continues to bring visitors and events back to the region.

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