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Former 9/11 Commissioner Publicly Advocates for Alternative Measures to Comply with Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)
Senator Slade Gorton Testifies at Field Hearing before Senate Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism

Concord, NH – June 2, 2006 – Senator Slade Gorton, former 9/11 Commissioner, testified on behalf of the Business for Economic Security, Tourism & Trade (BESTT) Coalition at a field hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism. Gorton's testimony on May 31 advocated for alternate methods for complying with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) as passed by Congress in 2004. WHTI charges the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State to “develop and implement a plan . . . to require a passport or other document, or combination of documents, deemed by the Secretary of Homeland Security to be sufficient to denote identity and citizenship, for all travel into the United States. . .” Currently under consideration for WHTI compliance is the controversial People Access Security and Service (PASS) Card. The PASS Card would require all of the same information and processing time as a passport but is approximately half the cost, fits in a wallet and would work only for land crossings.

In his testimony, Senator Gorton expressed reservations with the PASS Card proposal. “I know that many in New Hampshire and elsewhere have opposed the security-enhanced drivers licenses that will take effect under the REAL ID Act, but this new law does come with benefits. First, it creates a more secure foundation document for all of our nation's security cards, whether the passport, the PASS Card, or other options. Second, it allows us to consider how, on an individual, voluntary basis, drivers' licenses themselves can be combined with other requirements, like the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, for purposes like border crossing. Listening to, and working closely with states to realize the potential benefits of REAL ID will greatly aid in adopting practical and effective policies.”

A complete transcript of Senator Gorton's testimony is available at http://www.besttcoalition.com/files/Gorton_WHTI_Hearing_Testimony.pdf.

About BESTT

The Business for Economic Security, Trade & Tourism (BESTT) Coalition is an international coalition of businesses and trade associations from across the United States and Canada who share a common concern about the ramifications of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). BESTT's goal is to raise awareness of the important cultural and fiscal ties that exist across the 5,500 mile long border, and to help ensure public policies that promote these ties, while still addressing the legitimate security concerns of both countries.

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