



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AT
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**JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WILL NOT CHALLENGE PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE
GUIDELINES FOR TRAVEL AGENTS AND INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Department of Justice's Antitrust Division does not intend to challenge a proposal by one of the country's largest travel agent associations to provide guidelines intended to improve communications between travel agents and industry suppliers who provide air, hotel, car rental, cruise, rail and tour services.

The Department approved the proposal by the American Society of Travel Agents Inc. (ASTA) to establish "Supplier Communications Guidelines" because travellers may receive more reliable and efficient service, adoption of the guidelines is voluntary, and suppliers remain free to set their own rates and policies.

Assistant Attorney General Anne K. Bingaman in charge of the Antitrust Division said, "To the extent these guidelines can make the marketing of travel services more reliable and efficient, the travelling public will benefit."

The guidelines are designed to establish a common framework for communications between agents and suppliers concerning timely

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and complete notice of commission policies, booking status and commission eligibility regarding individual bookings made by travel agents.

The Department's position is stated in a business review letter from Bingaman to counsel for ASTA.

Bingaman stated that the proposed guidelines should not have an anticompetitive effect because adoption of the guidelines by individual travel industry suppliers will be purely voluntary. In addition, the guidelines prescribe only the methods and subjects of communication between travel suppliers and travel agents. Suppliers will remain free to set their own commission rates and commission policies.

Also, the guidelines may be procompetitive because they may eliminate unnecessary misunderstandings between travel agents and travel industry suppliers which would otherwise result in costly and needless disputes.

Under the Department's business review letter procedure, a person or organization may submit a proposed course of action to the Antitrust Division and receive a statement as to whether the Division will challenge the activity under the antitrust laws.

A file containing the business review request and the Department's response may be examined in the Legal Procedure Unit of the Antitrust Division, Room 3235, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530. After a 30-day waiting period, the

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documents supporting the business review will be added to the file.

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