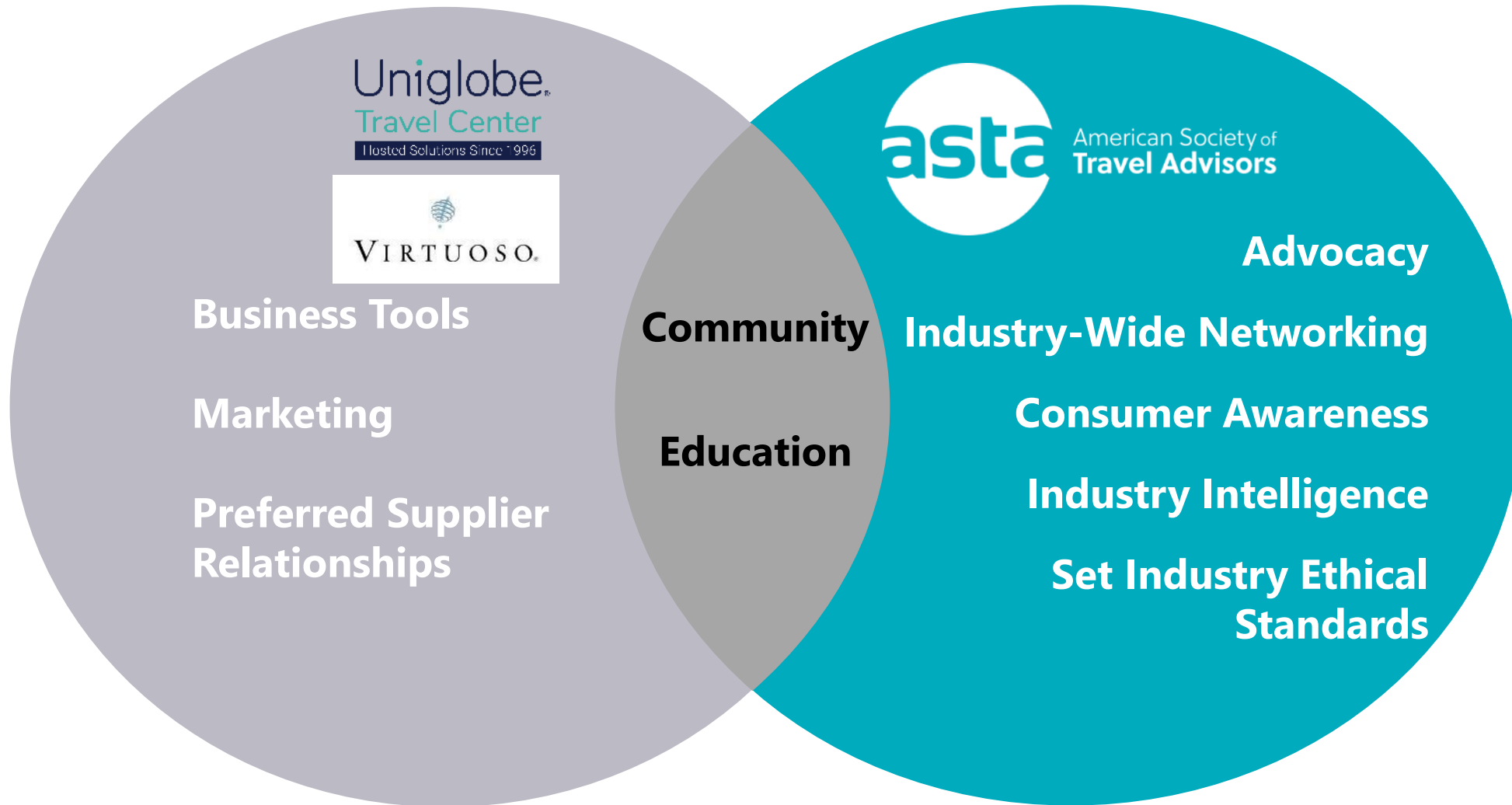




American Society of  
**Travel Advisors**

**An Essential Industry Membership**

# Stronger Together – Fully Supporting the Advisor Community



# WHAT IS ASTA ADVOCACY?

National trade association representing the agency community



# Advocating for the Small Business Owner

## Recent Initiatives and Wins 2012 - Present

- Inbound Covid Testing Requirement Rescinded (June 2022)
- Alaska Tourism Restoration Act (May 2021)
  - Signed into law May 24. Saved what was left of the Alaska cruise season
- Covid Financial Relief & Recovery (2020 & 2021)
  - Pandemic Unemployment Insurance
- Removal of the U.S Dept of Labor Blacklist
- California Assembly Bill 5 (2019)
- Real ID
- State Tax Issues
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Bill
- Travel Insurance Licensing

# August 2022

## Troublesome Draft DOT Rulemaking Proposal

The problematic aspects of the proposed regs reflect a **fundamental misunderstanding** of the travel advisor business, and as such we welcome any insights members are willing to share as we embark on this work.

Please contact us at **GovtAffairs@asta.org** with your thoughts on any piece of the proposal. It will be crucial for the Department to hear directly from those who stand to be affected by these proposed changes, especially any problems the DOT's further ensnaring of tickets agents in the airline refund process will cause.

### The HQ

#### DOT releases draft rule on airline refunds

Last week, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) released for public comment [draft regulations](#) that aim to strengthen protections for consumers seeking refunds for airline tickets. The package contains both enhanced consumer protections that ASTA has advocated for as well as more concerning provisions that would increase travel agencies' responsibility for refunds, regardless of whether the agency handled the client's funds in the transaction. Read our full member-only analysis of the proposal below and stay tuned for an upcoming grassroots campaign to help ASTA fight this part of the package.

[Read More](#)

### DOT Releases Draft Rule on Airline Refunds

08/08/2022

August 8, 2022

ASTA Members:

As you may have heard, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) released draft [regulations](#) for public comment that aim to strengthen protections for consumers seeking refunds for airline tickets. The package contains both enhanced consumer protections that ASTA has advocated for as well as provisions of concern that would increase the burden on travel agencies, regardless of whether the agency handled the client's funds in the transaction.

Upon initial review, the proposal contains several elements we supported in prior DOT proceedings on this issue, including a presentation before the Department's Aviation Consumer Protection Advisory Committee on [December 2, 2021](#). These include codifying airline changes/cancellations that trigger a refund and expanding refund rights for passengers unable to fly due to pandemic-related government travel bans. We also appreciate that the proposal would protect the ability of travel agencies to charge service and refund fees, which are charged for the agency's services and not for the flight. That said, some of the language related to agencies' responsibility to provide refunds in cases when they book air for clients but do not control client funds directly is problematic. Specifically:

- DOT is proposing to codify its longstanding interpretation that it is an unfair business practice for an airline or "ticket agent" (third party seller such as a travel agency) to refuse to provide requested refunds to consumers when an airline has cancelled or made a significant change to a scheduled flight and consumers found the alternative transportation offered by the carrier or the ticket agent to be unacceptable. While this provision is problematic on its face given that travel agencies typically don't handle client funds in air transactions and have no control over alternative transportation options, it is similar to [current regulations](#), which make it an unfair practice for ticket agents to "fail...to make proper refunds promptly when [air] service cannot be performed as contracted or representing that such refunds are obtainable only at some other point." We are aware of [no recent DOT enforcement against ticket agents](#) for violations of the current rules.
- DOT is also proposing to require airlines and ticket agents to provide non-expiring travel vouchers or credits to consumers holding non-refundable airline tickets who are unable to travel as scheduled in certain circumstances related to a serious communicable disease.
- The draft regulations also contain a provision ASTA has advocated for – defining what constitutes a "significant change" to a flight that would trigger a refund, including changes that affect the departure and/or arrival times by three hours or more for a domestic flight and six hours or more for an international flight; changes to the departure or arrival airport; changes that increase the number of connections in the itinerary; and changes to the type of aircraft flown. Currently, the airlines themselves define significant changes.
- DOT is proposing another change that ASTA has supported – allowing ticket agents to retain a service fee for purchasing the ticket or processing a refund or a non-expiring credit or voucher, as long as the fee is on a per-passenger basis and the existence and amount of the fee is clearly and prominently disclosed to consumers at the time they purchased the airfare.

# 2020/2021 Industry Affairs and Supplier Relations

## ASTA Called on Industry Partners and Suppliers to “Do What’s Right”

- Airline Flexibility Position Statement
- Debit Memo and Chargebacks Modifications
- Supplier Refunds, Cancellations and Commission Policy
- Supplier Contract Addendum



### **The Need for Increased Airline Flexibility for the Traveling Public During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Carrier relaxation of their strict refund and exchange policies and more needed now to help consumers during this COVID-19 crisis*

It is not surprising that the traveling public – consumers – bear the brunt of the strict refund and exchange rules and processes that exist throughout the travel supply chain. Indeed, these policies existed well before the current extenuating circumstance, the coronavirus pandemic. However, these rules, particularly those of the airlines, are now causing an unprecedented degree of frustration among travelers and travel advisors alike. Will this have a lasting impact on supplier brand loyalty?

Airlines are struggling as they move from selling seats in a pre-pandemic world, to a new world where seat sales are non-existent and refund requests are now the norm. The financial impact to carriers is great for which we cannot help but empathize. Travelers are becoming increasingly concerned with their inability to quickly obtain, or obtain at all, air ticket refunds for flights booked for trips that simply cannot take place as originally planned. Air isn't needed if the cruise departing from the flight's destination city has been canceled indefinitely; a hotel in that city that is now closed for business, or a tour that can no longer operate as scheduled due to border closings. Business travelers won't fly to attend a meeting or event that has been cancelled and will not be rebooked as long as the entire city is effectively closed. In these instances, and countless others, rebooking the flight makes no sense to either the leisure traveler or corporation. Air alone is only a part of the broader journey – the transport to the holiday of a lifetime, or an important business event – now canceled, and not merely postponed.

All this is exacerbated by the huge negative cash flow airlines are now experiencing. What was only a month or two ago a lucrative business, has now almost come to a standstill with aircraft parked and idled through no fault of any carrier.

To add to the complexity, credit card companies are focused on consumer protection looking for any source to hold accountable when a consumer chargeback

# Membership and Benefits Review

	Student \$95	Independent Contractor \$228/year	US Travel Agency \$390+/year*	Premium Travel Agency \$3,715+/year*	Premium Host Agency \$4,715+/year*
Advocacy	X	X	X	X	X
Industry updates and alerts (Travel Advisor Daily newsletter, Member Alerts, etc)	X	X	X	X	X
Access to member-only education (ie: Educational Journeys, Webinars)	X	X	X	X	X
Chapter Network – Member Assigned to a Chapter	X	X	X	X	X
Health Insurance	X	X	X	X	X
Member Advantage Program	X	X	X	X	X
Travel Advisor Magazine	X	X	X	X	X
Limited Access to ASTA.org (White Papers, Research, etc)	X	X	X	X	X
Consumer Profile		X	X	X	X
Consumer Leads		X	X	X	X
Voting Member (Note: Premiums receive 5 votes/company)		X	X	X	X
W2 Employee Receive Complimentary Membership on Agency Account			X	X	X
Eligible to run for the Board of Directors			X	X	X
Invitation to ASTA Premium Business Summit				X	X
Direct Access to ASTA Industry Experts				X	X
Full Access to ASTA.org (ie: Premium White Papers, Research, etc)				X	X
Listing in Host Agency or Consortium Directory					X
Seat on ASTA IC or Consortia Advisory Committee					X
Ability to promote products and services to advisor/agency members					X

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL ADVISORS

\*2023 Annual membership dues rates are listed above. Uniglobe Travel Center advisors receive a \$50 discount off ASTA's Independent Contractor Membership. Use promo code UTC50 on asta.org.

# Independent Contractor MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

ASTA's mission is to promote and defend the ENTIRE Travel Agency and Advisor Community, especially our growing community of travel entrepreneurs.

Leverage the tools and resources available to you as a member so you can focus on what you do best – selling travel.

This is an individual membership.



Uniglobe Travel Center Independent  
Contractors \$50 discount on Membership  
Use Promo Code – **UTC50**



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL ADVISORS



Industry advocacy and consumer awareness



Industry news, alerts and updates on critical issues affecting the agency and broader travel industry



Industry-wide networking at the national and local level



Access to member only white papers and research summaries



Access to our Association Health Care Plan and Business Insurance (E&O Insurance)



Member Only Savings on Meetings, Events and Programs



Consumer profile and access to consumer leads



Voting member



# U.S. Travel Agency MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Just as you are your client's number one advocate, ASTA is yours. As the trade association for the entire travel agency community, we represent the interests of ALL travel agencies of varying sizes and business models.

This membership category is designed to help you, your agency and its employees thrive. Stay plugged into critical issues affecting our industry and leverage our member-only resources.

This is a company membership.  
Add your W2 employees to your account.



If your agency has W2 employees, you are eligible to upgrade to the U.S. Travel Agency Membership. Uniglobe Travel Center's \$50 discount will apply. Use promo code **UTC50**.



Industry advocacy and consumer awareness



Industry news, alerts and updates on critical issues affecting the agency and broader travel industry



Industry-wide networking at the national and local level



Access to member only white papers and research summaries



Access to our Association Health Care Plan and Business Insurance (E&O Insurance)



Member Only Savings on Meetings, Events and Programs



Consumer profile and access to consumer leads for W2 employees



Voting member



# RESOURCES

## Designed for your business

[Travel Advisor Daily Email – E Newsletter](#)

[Travel Advisor Magazine](#)

[Member Alerts](#)

[Grassroots Advocacy Action Alerts](#)

[ASTA Member Lounge](#) (Private Member Facebook Group)

Free [Ethics for Travel Advisors Course](#)

[White Papers](#) and [Research Reports](#)

[Member Only Discounts on Meetings and Events](#)

Access to [Health Insurance](#) and [Business Insurance](#)

[Member Discounts on Educational Programs and Courses](#)

[Trusted Supplier Network](#) – Supporting the Agency Community

[Member Advantage Program](#)

*\*Please Note – You must be logged into your active ASTA Membership Account for full access to above resources.*





ASTA's Verified Travel Advisor (VTA) Certification Program enhances expert skills, provides unmatched training, and visibly reinforces the travel advisor's value for consumers and the travel industry.



## The CORE 9 courses

Advanced Public  
Speaking

Ethics for Travel  
Advisors

Marketing YOU!  
Promoting Your Value

Real-World Sales  
Tactics

U.S. Travel Agency Regulatory  
Compliance

Agency Relationships  
and the Law

Legal Overview for the Travel  
Agency Industry

Project Management and Planning  
for the Travel Advisor

The Art and Science  
of Negotiation

Nine courses developed  
by ASTA's in-house  
experts and outside  
business and industry  
professionals





ASTA'S VERIFIED TRAVEL ADVISOR (VTA) CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

## Pricing

VTA Program

**\$399**

\$729 for non-ASTA members

VTA Program for

Uniglobe.  
Travel Center

Trusted Solutions Since 1996

~~**\$399**~~

50% Discount - \$199.50

Use Promo Code

**[Redacted]**

\*Must be an active ASTA Member

Recertification

**\$179**

[www.ASTA.org/VTA](http://www.ASTA.org/VTA)

The ASTA logo is a teal circle containing the word "asta" in white, lowercase, sans-serif font.The text "Member Lounge" is written in a large, white, cursive script font across the center of the image. The background is a blurred photograph of a modern lounge area with colorful armchairs and sofas.A teal circular button with the text "JOIN US!" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

**Members Only Private Facebook Group**

- ✓ Exclusive media opportunities - YOU'RE the source!
- ✓ Unique training in marketing, media relations & more.
- ✓ Expert insights from ASTA HQ and industry leaders.



# 2023 MEETINGS & EVENTS

## **ASTA Global River Cruise Expo**

Budapest, Hungary | March 15 – 18, 2023

*Audience – Advisors, Managers, Owners*

[www.asta.org/rivercruiseexpo](http://www.asta.org/rivercruiseexpo)

## **ASTA Legislative Day**

Washington, DC | June 20 - 21, 2023

*Audience – Advisors, Managers, Owners*

[www.asta.org/legislateday](http://www.asta.org/legislateday)

## **ASTA Global Convention**

San Juan, Puerto Rico | May 2-4, 2023

*Audience – Advisors, Managers, Owners*

[www.astaglobalconvention.org](http://www.astaglobalconvention.org)

## **ASTA Caribbean Showcase**

Turks & Caicos | August 28-31

*Audience – Advisors, Managers, Owners*

**To view all events, visit:**

**[www.asta.org/professional-development/events/](http://www.asta.org/professional-development/events/)**

*“2022 was a memorable year. We emerged from the pandemic together, we launched two inaugural events, and we gathered all segments of the industry together to celebrate our accomplishments while at ASTA Global Convention and our Advocacy Dinner. I look forward to seeing you in 2023.”*

*– Andrea Caulfield,  
ASTA, Director, Membership*



**[ASTA Event Photo Albums](#)**

**[ASTA Global Convention Videos - Day 1, Day 2, Day 3](#)**

**[ASTA Travel Industry Forecast at The National Press Club](#)**



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**RIVER  
CRUISE**  
EXPO

THANK YOU TO OUR 2022 EXPO SPONSORS

Partners



[ASTA.org/Events](https://www.asta.org/events)



# River Cruise Expo

Budapest, Hungary | March 15–18, 2023


[www.astarivercruiseexpo.org](https://www.astarivercruiseexpo.org)





# ASTA Legislative Day

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 AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL ADVISORS

**Washington D.C. | June 20 – 21, 2023**



# Global Convention 2023

Puerto Rico | May 2-4

[www.astaglobalconvention.org](http://www.astaglobalconvention.org)

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Save \$50  
Use Promo Code  
ASTAIC50

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Please contact us if you have any questions.  
We are here to help you navigate your membership and make the most of your contribution.

