

American Hotel & Lodging Association's 2005 Legislative Action Summit

The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) is the national leader of the \$105 billion U.S. lodging industry. AH&LA's 10,000 membership consists of hotel/lodging corporations, owners, general managers, and operators located throughout the United States. AH&LA's Governmental Affairs Department provides the association with a comprehensive federal governmental affairs program covering legislative and regulatory issues. This effort includes establishing AH&LA's legislative positions and priorities and encouraging political participation by association members to communicate AH&LA's position to Members of Congress and federal regulatory agencies. The AH&LA Governmental Affairs Department's goal is to provide a favorable legislation and regulatory framework in which the lodging industry can prosper.

The following is a summary of the 2005 Issue Briefs:

Business Reform

AH&LA strongly supports strengthening the H-2B visa program to hire temporary seasonal workers by permanent reforms that properly balance economic demands and national security needs.

- AH&LA applauds Congress for the passage of legislation that provides short-term relief for users of the H-2B visa program which provides employers access to temporary seasonal workers.
- The ability of lodging properties to meet seasonal demands and expand revenues is predicated on finding temporary workers.
- Employers spend tens of thousands of dollars and hundreds of man hours in aggressive recruiting campaigns to hire Americans for short-term employment with limited success.
- In addition to being governed by all laws that apply to hiring American workers, including the minimum wage, hotels that hire H-2B workers typically pay for the worker's travel to and from the property and the worker's housing.
- In 1990, the number of annual H-2B visas granted was arbitrarily capped at 66,000. This number is woefully inadequate for our 21st century economy. In 2004, the cap was reached just six months into the federal fiscal year.
- Because employers may not apply for workers under the H-2B visa program more than 120 days prior to their actual demonstrated need, spring and summer employers have been frozen out of hiring the workers needed to operate their business.
- Recognizing the central role the H-2B visa program serves in our economy, Congress responded to our lobbying efforts by approving short-term relief in H.R. 1268, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief Act, which:
 - Temporarily exempts from the cap prior H-2B workers who have participated in the program in one of the previous 3 years and successfully complied with all program requirements.
 - Reserves 33,000 visas of the 66,000 numerical cap for each half of the federal fiscal year; and,
 - Creates a new anti-fraud fee of \$150 to be paid by the employer for each petition submitted for consideration.

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS: Enact permanent reform to the H-2B visa program that balances economic demands and our national security needs by making the exemption from the cap for previous law-abiding workers permanent and/or by basing the cap on current economic demand rather than a static arbitrary figure.

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Americans with Disabilities Act

AH&LA supports a responsible and common sense approach to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

- The lodging industry unconditionally supports the goals of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in any place of public accommodation.
- Presently, lodging properties often find themselves embroiled in spurious lawsuits aimed, not at providing greater accessibility for our disabled guests, but rather at extracting monetary settlements from our members for alleged violations that may be easily remedied. AH&LA believes that, in certain limited instances, the member property should be given an opportunity to cure the alleged non-compliance before the judicial process proceeds past the filing of a complaint. In addition to solving any alleged ADA non-compliance problems, this approach relieves our already overburdened court system of litigation that a reasonable, common sense approach will address.
- Toward that end, Representative Mark Foley (R-Fla.) is expected to introduce common sense legislation that provides that a court has no jurisdiction in a civil action related to places of public accommodations and commercial facilities under Title III of the ADA unless:
 - Before filing the complaint, the plaintiff provides to the lodging property written notice of the alleged violation;
 - The notice identifies the specific facts that allegedly constitute the violation and the date upon which the violation allegedly occurred;
 - 90 or more days has elapsed after the date on which said notice was provided;
 - The notice informs the defendant that the civil action may not be advanced until the expiration of such 90-day period; and
 - The complaint states that, as of filing date, the lodging property has not corrected the alleged violation.

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS: Pass a common sense approach to ADA compliance while supporting the goals and mandates of the ADA.

U.S. Destination Marketing

AH&LA supports public and private efforts to promote travel to the United States.

- Travel and tourism is a vital part of the U.S. economy. International visitors spend \$80 billion annually in the U.S. and directly support 1 million U.S. jobs.
- Impediments to international travelers coming to the U.S. – including visa processing delays, the looming October 2005 deadline for visa waiver travelers to have biometric passports, and the requirement for all western hemisphere travelers to obtain passports or other accepted documentation to re-enter the U.S. – place negative pressure on the U.S. travel and tourism industry.
- These developments have created a pessimistic international perception of the U.S. as a tourist destination – international arrivals have dropped from a record high of 50.9 million in 2000 to 40.4 million in 2003 – and the positive balance of trade generated by travel peaked at \$26 billion in 1997 and has plummeted to just \$2.6 billion in 2003.
- The 108th Congress set aside \$16 million for promoting the U.S. as an international travel and tourism destination. The lodging industry is grateful for this important step and urges Congress to increase funding to enhance the effectiveness of this important initiative.

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS: Increase funding to create a long-term program to promote the U.S. as the world's premier travel destination.

The board would like to especially thank Ralph Ney, Vice President of Education, for attending the AH&LA Legislative Action Summit and informing us of the legislative issues on a National level.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL - Help defeat Senate Bill 328 by C.D. Jones.

This bill sets up Tax Increment Funding (TIF) using Hotel Occupancy Taxes for unnamed projects. While this bill affects only the Monroe-West Monroe area, it sets a dangerous precedent that could be used to erode the already limited funds that area CVB's and Tourist Commissions use to market their areas. Call your Senators now! Tell them you are opposed to SB 328.

In every legislative session it becomes fair game on increasing hotel taxes, because Legislators have yet to understand how regressive taxation is on the travel and tourism industry. We have no control over State spending and yet when they get into their annual financial jam, hotels are then looked to for even more taxes, in an already over-taxed, and over-built Baton Rouge market" Margrett Fels, Vice President

THIS 2005 LEGISLATIVE SESSION STAY INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED!

Less than a month after the ABC bowling tournament winds down, the nationally televised Miss Teen USA Pageant will come to town and account for 3,000 room nights at what is traditionally a slow time of the year. Kudos to Renée Areng, Paul Arrigo and the rest of the CVB staff for all they have done to make 2005 such a great convention year!



Congratulations

For the sixth consecutive year, the Best Western Chateau Louisianne has won the 2005 Director's Award from Best Western International. The honor signifies Chateau Louisianne's place among the top 15% Best Western hotels nationwide. Congratulations to General Manager Margrett Fels and her fabulous staff!

PLEASE MAKE A NOTE...
OUR PHONE NUMBERS HAVE CHANGED!
OFFICE: 752.1455
FAX: 752.4855

Introducing the New BRHMA Classified Section!

For up to date postings please check online at www.brhma.org



Full-Time Position – 40 hours. Relief Night Auditor and Guest Service Agent. Small, limited service boutique hotel seeks mature individual with HOTEL front desk/Night Audit experience. Salary DOE. Neat! Benefits. Apply in person: Best Western Chateau Louisianne 710 N Lobdell

Now hiring part-time positions for a driver earning tips of \$20 per hour plus hourly pay. Requires CDL with Passenger Endorsement. Tips plus hourly rate. Email: chapmanj@relianttransportation.com

Is your hotel listed? JazzNet Hotels is an on line hotel reservation service that offers one of the best selections of Baton Rouge Hotels at the best possible discount rates! Jazz Net is the online booking engine for the CVB's website. To find out if you are listed go to jazznethotels.com/ This is a FREE service if you are not listed call 1.888.763.0753 and ask to speak with Fred!

If you would like to list your classified needs in the quarterly newsletter or permanently online please send an email to brhma@brhma.org.



INNspired

Baton Rouge Hospitality Management Association
Post Office Box 4092
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Upcoming Events

For up to date information please visit www.brhma.org

General Meetings:

July: No Meeting – Have a great summer!

August 11th

Embassy Suites

Dwight Brashear - CATS

September Date TBA

HMA, SME, HSA Joint meeting Speaker TBA

BRHMA Mission

Creating a unified hospitality industry through business partnerships, collaboration, continuing education, and networking.