

AAHOA Applauds Outcomes of Florida Legislative Session

Touts New Protections and Funding for Fla. Small Businesses

ATLANTA, Ga., May 5 – AAHOA, the nation’s largest hotel owners association, touted significant legislative victories for Florida’s hospitality industry in the most recent legislative session in Tallahassee. The state ushered in one of the most comprehensive COVID-19 liability protection plans in the nation in addition to providing critical funding for Visit Florida, the state’s successful tourism marketing corporation.

“Florida is on the road to recovery. As tourists return to the sunshine state, it is important that small business owners know they are protected from liability if they make a good faith effort to comply with existing rules, regulations, and guidance regarding COVID-19 safety and sanitation practices. This will help protect hoteliers and other business owners from frivolous drive-by lawsuits,” AAHOA President & CEO Cecil P. Staton said.

The legislature also approved \$50 million to fund Visit Florida, and the corporation will receive \$25 million in federal relief dollars. Travel and tourism support over 1.5 million jobs across the state. Traditionally, the travel and tourism industry compensated for economic slowdowns in other sectors of the state’s economy and will be key to helping the state as the economy recovers from the pandemic.

“Visit Florida is an incredibly successful program that not only showcases all that the state offers but also generates \$2.15 in tax revenue for every dollar the state invests in the program. Visit Florida will be critical to reviving the travel and tourism industry in Florida and helping small businesses thrive,” Staton added.

Legislation introduced by Sen. Manny Diaz and Rep. Jason Fischer which sought to create a more defined regulatory structure for short-term rentals died in committee (SB 522: Vacation Rentals).

“While the legislation made the right moves towards proper licensing, safety, sanitation, and tax collection and remittance by short-term rental platforms, it did not go far enough to ensure a level playing field between short-term rentals and hotels,” Staton said. “We encourage the legislature to continue working to properly regulate short-term rentals and crack down on illegal hotels that shortchange customers and communities across the state,” he concluded.

About AAHOA:

AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the world. The nearly 20,000 AAHOA members represent almost one in every two hotels in the United States. With billions of dollars in property assets and hundreds of thousands of employees, AAHOA members are core economic contributors in virtually every community. AAHOA is a proud defender of free enterprise and the foremost current-day example of realizing the American dream.

###