

October 2019



QUARTERLY POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Welcome to VISIT DENVER's quarterly *Policy Perspectives* newsletter highlighting local, state and federal issues impacting the tourism and hospitality industry. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Carrie Atiyeh, Director of Government & Community Affairs, at catiyeh@visitdenver.com or (303) 571-9466.

LOCAL NEWS



- There are several important updates regarding initiatives in the [Denver Tourism Roadmap](#):
 - VISIT DENVER and the Colorado Hotel and Lodging Association (CHLA), with support from the Tourism Improvement District (TID), are focusing on several workforce development projects.
 - CU Denver's CityCenter has developed a [comprehensive inventory](#) of existing training, certification and educational programs to help our partners recruit and retain employees in the local tourism and hospitality industry. We hope this is a valuable resource and encourage you to share it with your human resources department and other colleagues!
 - To help spread the word about the diverse career opportunities available in the tourism and hospitality industry, several local [hotel employees shared their personal stories](#) in a video about their professional growth.
 - Denver City Council has made additional updates to rules and regulations regarding e-scooters, which are [no longer permitted on sidewalks](#).
 - Formal design work is underway for the [5280 Trail](#), a new bike and pedestrian connector among Denver neighborhoods and attractions.
- Mayor Hancock and Councilwoman Kniech unveiled a proposal to [increase the minimum wage citywide effective January 1, 2020](#) to \$13.80 per hour and rising to \$15.87 per hour in 2021.
- According to the annual Dean Runyan report, tourism supports more than 60,000 employees and [saves each household more than \\$550 annually](#) in the Denver metro region. Within the City and County of Denver, nearly 40,000 people are employed and each household saves approximately \$1,500 annually.

- Analysis by Denver's Department of Economic Development and Opportunity determined that [short-term rentals do not impact housing costs](#) and make up approximately 1% of the city's total housing supply.

STATE NEWS



- According to Airbnb, Colorado hosts welcomed nearly [900,000 guests and earned almost \\$150 million](#) this summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day including approximately 90,000 guests and over \$14 million in Summit County and more than \$30 million and 185,000 guests in Denver.
- [Snowstang](#), the Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) new bus service to help alleviate traffic congestion along the I-70 mountain corridor, will be connecting Denver skiers to Loveland, Arapahoe Basin and Steamboat Springs beginning this ski season.
- Colorado State University (CSU) has launched a graduate level certification program to help grow and promote the state's [agritourism industry](#).
- The Town of Breckenridge is investing in a new [workforce housing program](#) to help preserve and grow the area's affordable housing stock for local employees.

FEDERAL NEWS



- The travel industry thanks Colorado Senator Gardner and other Senate and House co-sponsors for their support to [renew Brand USA](#), the United States' international marketing program. Renewal of Brand USA is critical to slowing and reversing the [loss of U.S. market share of international visitors](#).
- Representatives Massie (R-KY) and Blumenauer (D-OR) have introduced legislation to allow airports to [increase the Passenger Facility Charge \(PFC\)](#) to finance critical construction projects.

INTERNATIONAL



- Following [Hurricane Dorian](#), the Bahamas is urging tourists to visit non-impacted areas in order to help rebuild the local economy.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES



Should you have questions or need further information on anything that CHLA is working on, please don't hesitate to contact Amie Mayhew, President & CEO, at 303-297-8335 or amayhew@chla.com.



Please contact Nick Hoover, Government Affairs Coordinator or Sonia Riggs, President & CEO, at 303-830-2972, should you have questions or need further information on anything that CRA is working on.

The Colorado Restaurant Association has been working hard to highlight the dangers of Denver's proposed minimum wage increase to \$15.87 by 2021. There are really two problems that restaurants have with this proposal. First, it is too much, too fast. Denver's proposal would, in just three months, increase Denver's minimum wage by \$2.70 on January 1, 2020, followed by another \$2.07 by 2021. This is the fastest increase in the minimum wage that we have seen in the country. This results in a more than 50% increase in the tipped minimum wage, currently at \$8.08, in just 15 months. When 95 to 97 cents of every dollar spent in a restaurant goes back to the people, the place, and the food, there is not a lot of room for additional costs. Denver is giving restaurants no time to plan or figure out how they might be able to absorb this excessive increase.

Second, this proposal will significantly increase the earnings disparity between tipped employees and kitchen staff. Right now, Denver restaurants are already paying their kitchen staff well above minimum wage usually between \$16-18 dollars an hour. While at the same time, tipped employees are taking home anywhere between \$20-40 an hour. This proposal limits a restaurant's ability to provide anything more to the kitchen staff where they are already struggling to find and keep employees.

CRA CEO Sonia Riggs has outlined the restaurant industry's opposition to this proposal in several media outlets, including this story on [9News](#), and this article in the [Denver Post](#). The [Denver Business Journal](#) has a good assessment of the hike and the consequences.

The CRA, along with restaurant operators, will be meeting with representatives from the Mayor's office on October 3rd to discuss their proposal.



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