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Welcome to the first, quarterly *Policy Perspectives* newsletter designed specifically for you – our valued partners. In this newsletter you will find information and resources about local, state and federal policies impacting the tourism industry. VISIT DENVER hopes this inaugural edition, and future newsletters, will be a helpful resource to keep you informed of current issues.

Your questions, feedback and recommendations are appreciated as this newsletter progresses. Please do not hesitate to contact me at catiyeh@visitdenver.com or (303) 571-9466.

Sincerely,

Carrie

Carrie Atiyeh
Director, Government & Community Affairs



- VISIT DENVER highlighted tourism successes for the first half of 2014 in the recently issued, *State of the Bureau Report, 6-Month Review*. Policy highlights include:
 - A feasibility study conducted by Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) found that Denver continues to have an excellent reputation as a convention destination, and that the Colorado Convention Center (CCC) has a history of solid occupancy. The [report recommended](#) adding additional ballroom and meeting space, creating new "experiential" networking facilities, and upgrading technology. SAG also encouraged the City to do a rigorous review of potential hotel development near the CCC in order to create more demand for the center and hotel community. Implementing these recommendations could mean 36,000 new attendees for an incremental impact of \$47.2 million in annual direct delegate spending, generating an additional \$3.4 million annually in local sales and hotel taxes.
 - Since 2005 when Denver voters approved an increase in the lodger's tax to go towards tourism marketing, Denver has seen a [48 percent increase in leisure visitors](#); over the same time period, the rest of the nation has seen only a 15 percent increase in tourism.
- Six significant infrastructure projects in North Denver are collectively referred to as the [North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative](#) (NDCC). VISIT DENVER is participating in the National Western Center Advisory Committee as the complex focuses on multi-use venues for year-round events.

- The downtown environment, including aggressive panhandling and homeless, is the number one complaint VISIT DENVER receives from visitors. In partnership with the Downtown Denver Partnership and the Business Improvement District, VISIT DENVER provided funding for off-duty police officers along the 16th Street Mall between Welton and Champa Streets in June, July and August. While there was an improvement along these blocks, additional challenges were created along adjacent blocks. VISIT DENVER will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to improve the downtown environment and work towards sustainable solutions for those in need.
- Councilwoman Mary Beth Susman is chairing a [special task force](#) to examine the "sharing economy" and is currently examining short-term home sharing, such as Airbnb. As recommendations may be made for regulation, VISIT DENVER is encouraging the task force to consider visitor safety, lodger's tax, and other policy issues. See more below from CHLA.
- Denver municipal elections will be held on May 5, 2015. Mayor, Auditor, and Clerk & Recorder will be elected and six of the 13 City Council seats are open (no incumbent). VISIT DENVER is reaching out to [potential candidates](#) to inform them about the economic benefits of tourism.
- RTD's [Central Rail Extension](#) (CRE) is a FasTracks project which proposes to link existing light rail service to the new 38th and Blake station. The CRE proposes to [loop through downtown](#) along 14th Street, including a possible new station across from the Colorado Convention Center. VISIT DENVER is coordinating with RTD, the City and County of Denver, and area property owners as the project progresses.

STATE NEWS



- VISIT DENVER partnered with nearly two dozen business organizations for a Gubernatorial and U.S. Senatorial debate on October 6th, which was hosted by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. The [debate between Governor Hickenlooper and Bob Beauprez](#) touched on state issues such as education, energy, and marijuana. Governor Hickenlooper stated he would not push for an increase in the minimum wage but that if the policy is examined a tip-credit (for many hospitality workers, for example) should be considered. Mr. Beauprez would not seek to eliminate or increase the minimum wage. View the exchange at 36:30 minutes.
- Solutions to address congestion and the failing viaduct along I-70 East have been studied for more than a decade. The [proposed alternative](#), open for public comment through October 31st, is to lower I-70 from Brighton Boulevard to Colorado Boulevard below street grade and add additional lanes. VISIT DENVER's Board of Directors approved a resolution in support of CDOT's preferred Partial Cover Lowered alternative on October 15th.

FEDERAL NEWS



- VISIT DENVER partnered with nearly two dozen business organizations for a Gubernatorial and U.S. Senatorial debate on October 6th, which was hosted by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. The [debate between Senator Udall and Representative Gardner](#) addressed topics of national concern including immigration, tax reform and health care.

- The U.S. Travel Association is closely monitoring the Ebola disease and coordinating travel protocol with the White House, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other leaders. An [Ebola Toolkit](#) provides talking points, fact sheets, links to CDC information and other materials helpful to those in the tourism industry.
- The General Services Administration has announced [new per diem rates](#) for federal employee lodging and meals while on official travel. Denver's lodging rate increased from \$156 to \$163 and meals and incidental expenses were maintained at \$66. The new rates took effect October 1, 2014.
- [Brand USA](#) is a non-profit public-private partnership dedicated to attracting more international visitors, and the economic benefits they bring, to the United States — all at no cost to federal taxpayers. The Travel Promotion, Enhancement and Modernization Act of 2014 to reauthorize this successful program has been introduced in the U.S. Senate (S. 2250) and passed the House of Representatives (H.R. 4450).
- Two of the Department of Homeland Security's trusted traveler programs, PreCheck and Global Entry, have reached [significant enrollment milestones](#).
- The U.S. Travel Association (USTA) recently launched an interactive [Congressional Scorecard](#) to track elected officials' record of support for critical travel policies.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES



- CHLA is actively watching the movement across the country to increase the minimum wage. Of great concern to the hotel industry is the [action by the Los Angeles City Council](#) on October 1st to pass a discriminatory measure to increase the minimum wage to \$15.37 for hotels only. Recognizing that this ordinance is a direct attack on our industry, the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) is undertaking a comprehensive strategy to block this discriminatory measure.
- CHLA and AH&LA are closely monitoring efforts around the state and the country to regulate Airbnb and VRBO (Vacation Rental By Owner). The San Francisco Board of Supervisors recently passed [legislation](#) creating a new regulatory framework for short-term online rental companies and Mayor Ed Lee has indicated he intends to sign the bill.

CHLA, in partnership with VISIT DENVER, is in the process of examining local, state and federal regulations impacting the hotel and lodging industry and reviewing short-term rental policy considerations.

- CHLA has been very engaged with the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Colorado State Patrol and other interested entities in finding solutions to the many [weather related closures](#) of I-70 in the mountain corridor. These closures are frustrating to travelers and costly to businesses and CHLA is very committed to [working with stakeholders](#) to find both short and long-term solutions. In addition to continuing to work with CDOT, CHLA is actively working with several Legislators and will likely be promoting pro-active legislation on this issue in 2015.

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, Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association, at 303-297-8335 or amayhew@chla.com.



- The Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA) spent Spring and Summer working with the Colorado Dept. of Revenue - Liquor Enforcement Division – in a liquor compliance workgroup, which included other stakeholders such as MADD, Breckenridge Police Dept., Colorado Counties Inc., representatives from the liquor industry (Retailers, Distributors, Manufacturer's) and more. The group developed a series of recommendations relating to liquor regulation that are fair and reasonable to the industry while protecting public safety.
- The CRA Board of Directors voted to oppose Proposition 105, The "GMO" Labeling Ballot Initiative. Passage of Proposition 105 will result in higher food prices as farmers, food manufacturers, distributors, and retailers pass their costs to comply with the labeling requirements on to consumers. The board also feels that the proposition is misleading and that consumers already have the ability to identify products that don't contain GMOs.
- Like CHLA – we too are closely watching the minimum wage issue across the country. Many have seen the fast-food protesters in recent months. Few if any of those protesters are actually restaurant workers. Most are paid protesters. This is an attempt to unionize the restaurant industry while vilifying an industry that is rich with opportunity for people of all backgrounds.
- We are also pushing back against a Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) report released recently alleging a correlation between the tipped minimum wage and claims of sexual harassment in the restaurant industry. Fifty percent of our nation's restaurants are owned or co-owned by women. We take pride in the fact that more women own, operate and manage restaurants than virtually any other industry. Tips are not discriminatory. Every tipped employee is guaranteed at least their state minimum wage and tipped restaurant employees are among the highest-paid employees in the establishment, regularly earning between \$16 an hour for entry-level servers and \$22 an hour for more experienced servers.

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

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1555 California Street, Suite 300 :: Denver, CO 80202 :: 303.892.1112

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