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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.



DECEMBER 2015

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

LOCAL NEWS



- Denver voters [overwhelmingly approved ballot initiative 2C](#) to fund expansion of the Colorado Convention Center and redevelopment of the National Western Center. VISIT DENVER will continue working closely with the City and other partners to issue an RFP for the project as soon as possible. You can follow [progress of the expansion](#) at a newly created website.
- Ballot initiative [1A for DIA also received broad voter support](#) in Denver and Adams County to expand commercial development opportunities around the airport.
- RTD announced the new [A Line commuter rail](#) between Denver International Airport and Denver Union Station will begin service on April 22nd, 2016. VISIT DENVER is excited about this convenient new transportation option for convention and leisure visitors. The one-way fare for the 37-minute ride will be \$9.00.
- VISIT DENVER recently presented convention and leisure visitor feedback regarding downtown safety concerns at a [City Council meeting focusing on homelessness](#). Negative comments regarding the downtown environment, including cleanliness, drugs, panhandling, homeless, safety and youth, grew from 36% in 2013 to 49% of responses in 2014, far outweighing any other concerns. VISIT DENVER will continue to work collaboratively with City Council and other stakeholders to find solutions that keep all people in Denver safe while enjoying the 16th Street Mall and other downtown attractions and amenities.
- The City of Denver hosted the first [Denver Marijuana Management Symposium](#), drawing more than 200 city and state policy experts and elected officials from more than a dozen states around the country. The symposium offered attendees the opportunity to learn from Denver and Colorado experts about the successful implementation of retail marijuana under Amendment 64.
- Denver City Council continues to work on developing [regulations for short-term home sharing](#) including Airbnb. Colorado Public Radio has recently completed an [extensive analysis](#) of this market in Denver.
- Boulder voters approved assessing [taxes on short-term home sharing](#). Resources will be used for regulatory administration costs with any excess to be directed to affordable housing.

- Save the date for VISIT DENVER's 17th Annual Denver & Colorado Tourism Hall of Fame Dinner on Wednesday, March 9th from 5:00-9:00 p.m. in the Mile High Ballroom at the Colorado Convention Center. Come to welcome and congratulate the newest Hall of Fame inductees and Tours Stars. More info to follow.
- The 31st annual [Martin Luther King, Jr. Business Awards luncheon](#) will be Friday, January 15th. Former U.S. Senator Ken Salazar will be the keynote speaker. Award recipients include Michelle Campbell, Marco Campos, New America Schools, Angelina Rivera-Malpiede, Southwest Airlines, and recent Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Minoru Yasui (posthumously).

STATE NEWS



- Cathy Ritter has been hired as the [new director of the Colorado Tourism Office](#). She previously served as director of the Illinois Bureau of Tourism and will begin her time in Colorado with a state-wide listening tour.
- A newly released study finds that Colorado's [ski industry generates \\$4.8 billion in annual economic impact](#) and supports 46,000 jobs.
- The state's new Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry has formed an [advisory board](#) to help guide the office's efforts. Outdoor recreation is big business for Colorado. The Outdoor Industry Association in Boulder estimates [outdoor recreation in Colorado stirs about \\$13.2 billion in annual consumer spending](#), generating \$994 million in local and state taxes and employing 125,000 workers.
- The Tourism Industry Association of Colorado (TIAC) annual legislative reception will be held on Monday, January 25th from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Brown Palace. For more information and to purchase tickets, please contact Janie McCullough at janiemc@comcast.net.
- Colorado [gaming taxes and revenues are on the rise](#) and expected to surpass the previous record set in 2007 before the recession hit. Gaming funds are the primary source of funding for the Colorado Tourism Office.
- Colorado voters approved [ballot initiative BB](#), which allows the state to retain and spend retail marijuana taxes already collected.

FEDERAL NEWS



- The Visa Waiver Program ([VWP is under intense review](#)) as a result of the recent Paris and San Bernardino terrorist attacks. The VWP helps support international tourism and the [U.S. Travel Association](#) is working closely with lawmakers and the White House to strengthen the security provisions of the program.
- A [poll from AAA](#) recently found that seven in 10 U.S. residents want Congress to increase the amount of money it spends on transportation projects. Recently, Congress agreed to a [five-year, \\$300-billion surface transportation bill](#) which includes a requirement for state and local transportation planners to consider strategies to enhance travel and tourism and direct the Transportation Department to develop a National Travel and Tourism Infrastructure Strategy.

- Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent visit to the U.S. resulted in a new initiative to open and promote [travel between the U.S. and China](#), expand market access and improve the overall visitor experience in both nations.
- Millennials were nearly twice as likely to want to travel more for business than Baby Boomers, and a strong majority of millennials believed technology could never replace face-to-face meetings, according to a recent [report from the Global Business Travel Association](#) (GBTA).
- The National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) recently released [updated forecasts](#) for travel to the U.S. through 2020. International inbound visitation in 2014 was revised upward to 75.0 million visitors from 74.8 million earlier in the year.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES



Below are updates on several important policy issues that MDLC, CHLA, and AH&LA are currently tracking:

Metro Denver Lodging Council

Marijuana Ballot Initiative: MDLC and CHLA are actively engaged in conversations both with the Denver City Council and the State Legislature in regards to marijuana social clubs legislation. At this point we believe there will be at least one bill on this subject introduced at the Statehouse during the 2016 legislative session and that Denver is likely to sit on the sidelines until that process has completed. MDLC and CHLA continue to be active participants in the stakeholders processes both at the City and State levels and we look forward to being part of a reasonable solution that will serve Denver residents and visitors well for many years to come.

16th Street Mall: The MDLC continues to have serious concerns about the state of the 16th Street Mall. We are pleased the Mayor's office has convened the REDD sub-committees to "look at the increase of activity that does not support the vibrant, active area downtown that is desired by business owners, community leaders and visitors to Denver" and we are actively participating in this effort.

Short Term Online Rentals: MDLC continues to monitor Denver's efforts to pass a package of ordinances to regulate short term online rentals. Of particular importance to MDLC is that short term rentals be required to pay the lodging tax. In addition, MDLC is supportive of residency requirements to guard against the threat "Airbnb Hotels" that are created when one property owner buys multiple apartments or condominiums in one building with the intent of renting them all as short term rentals.

CHLA

Annual Report: CHLA's 21015 Annual Report has been delivered to the membership. [Click here](#) to read about CHLA's accomplishments in 2015 and our plans for 2016.

AH&LA

Visa Wavers: Earlier this month, AH&LA sent a letter to Congress detailing their views on related legislation being considered by both the House and the Senate. The first, a House bill that AH&LA supported along with U.S. Travel -- would make largely reasonable changes to the program, most notably prohibiting people who have traveled recently to Iraq or Syria from using the visa waiver program. The second, legislation in the Senate is more concerning, as it would go too far in reforming the program, that AH&LA is not

supporting. For example, the bill's requirements for the collection of biometrics from users of the visa waiver program appear to have very limited security benefits while creating significant implementation challenges that could severely undermine the overall program.

AH&LA's goal remains to help ensure that as Congress makes changes to visa waiver and other travel programs, Congress does not take imprudent steps that would severely damage our industry and the broader economy, while failing to provide meaningful improvements in security. AH&LA will continue to collaborate with other travel industry players, particularly U.S. Travel who provides important leadership on this issue, in pushing sensible reforms that make the country safer.

Efforts Continue to Preserve Long-Standing Joint Employer Standard: Through the Coalition to Save Local Business, which AH&LA co-chairs, and members' grassroots efforts, AH&LA is actively working with members of Congress to include language in the end of the year omnibus spending bill that would block the National Labor Relations Board's (NLRB) Browning-Ferris Industries decision, which upends 30 years of labor law and creates uncertainty for small business owners who could lose autonomy over their businesses. Though this is an uphill battle, by continuing to pressure congressional leaders as the omnibus bill undergoes negotiations, AH&LA aims to restore the former definition of joint employer while protecting the small business and the franchise model. If you haven't already done so, please click [here](#) and send a letter to your Member of Congress advocating for this legislation.

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.



Stakeholder Groups

Powdered Alcohol:

As a result of legislation passed earlier this year (House Bill 15-1031), a group of stakeholders (convened by the Dept. of Revenue, Liquor Enforcement Division) has been meeting throughout the summer to discuss the regulation of powdered alcohol. Rules were drafted and a public hearing was held on December 2nd. Throughout the stakeholder process this summer, the CRA has expressed the concerns of restaurants and the hospitality industry about the ease of concealment with this product and the potential for its misuse by customers (including minors) in a liquor-licensed establishment. Although these concerns were discussed by CRA and other members of the stakeholders group, no regulations were drafted that satisfactorily address those concerns. At the rulemaking hearing, we requested that the Liquor Enforcement Division postpone the adoption of the proposed regulations until a more thoughtful and deliberate process for regulating the sale, distribution, possession, manufacture, and import of this product can be established that addresses the many apprehensions surrounding this new product and the public safety issues that come with it. We submitted a petition to LED with more than 180 signatures from CRA members. Three other associations signed on to the petition as well. We are now waiting for a response from LED.

Marijuana in Denver:

CRA testified before the Denver City Council's Business Development Committee meeting recently in support of a brief extension of the transition period for recreational marijuana license applications. While participating on the Denver Marijuana Policy Stakeholder group, the CRA submitted a recommendation for a one-year extension of the transition period while stakeholders come together to discuss what social use and public consumption of marijuana looks like in Denver. We believe that in order to create effective and appropriate regulations on the use of marijuana it should be done while the industry is at status quo. The original proposal before Denver City Council was a 2-year extension. This was met with hostility by the marijuana industry and was negotiated down to a 120-day extension. The CRA remains committed to meeting with stakeholders to discuss social use and public consumption of marijuana and plans to participate in those conversations in early 2016. (It is important to note that legislation on the "public consumption" of marijuana will likely be introduced at the state level in the upcoming legislative session as well. We are participating with the bill sponsors in a series of stakeholder groups to discuss alternatives).

Retail Food Establishment License Program:

The working group hosted by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) that was created as a result of House Bill 15-1226 concerning Retail Food Establishment License Fees and has been meeting throughout the summer has nearly completed its work. The group has been addressing issues related to the retail food inspection program including: training, communication of health inspections to the public, plan review and uniformity of the inspection program. CDPHE, Colorado Counties Inc., and the

Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO) are asking for increases to the retail food establishment licensing fees, along with streamlined fee categories. Industry members (restaurants, grocers and convenience stores) are asking for uniformity in inspections, an agreement of how to appropriately communicate inspection results to the public and faster plan reviews. We anticipate legislation to be introduced in 2016 as a result of these meetings.

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



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