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Reopening Tomorrow Requires **Action Today**

**For immediate release:** March 4, 2021

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## **Tourism Officials and Labor Groups Call on Governor Newsom to Immediately Issue Guidelines for Business Meetings, Events and Conventions**

### ***Lack of Guidelines is Preventing California from Competing with Other States for Business in 2022 and Beyond***

**Sacramento** – Frustrated officials and union leaders representing California’s business travel, events and conventions industry are calling on Governor Gavin Newsom to immediately issue statewide guidelines clarifying under what conditions business meetings, events and conventions in California can resume someday.

In a [letter](#) to Governor Newsom released today signed by 131 tourism officials and labor groups, advocates said California is losing business and jobs to other states not just today but in 2022 and beyond because of the uncertainty caused by a lack of guidelines.

They called on Governor Newsom to focus his attention immediately on this sector of the economy which accounted for \$66.1 billion in direct spending and 457,000 jobs in 2019. For every month California delays opening for business meeting and events, the state is losing \$4.1 billion in economic activity. This data comes from two studies from Oxford Economics released in October 2020.

In the letter, tourism and labor officials say that the governor’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy makes no mention of business meetings, events and conventions and no guidelines for safe future re-openings have been issued or even discussed by the Newsom administration. Potential clients looking to book events in California see this as a signal that California is closed indefinitely.

“We’re not asking Governor Newsom to open California to business meetings and events tomorrow, we’re asking for a plan today so we can safely hold events in the future,” said Barb Newton, President & CEO, CalTravel. “These events bring more than just direct revenue and jobs. They bring people who spend money on hotel rooms, restaurants, local shops and services. The ripple effect is huge and benefits both large and small communities but we’re losing the benefits to other states.”

Newton pointed out that nearly all other states are safely holding business meetings, events and conventions right now. The California travel industry finalized a plan in June 2020 which outlined how California could also safely hold meetings. It adhered to standards established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and included best practice recommendations for sanitation, staff training, physical distancing, and communication.

But the Administration has yet to adopt it or release guidelines of its own.

In the meantime, California is losing revenue and jobs as customers are backing out of events for late 2021, 2022 and beyond.

“Business meetings and events create hundreds of thousands of jobs,” said Tommy Faavae, IBEW Local 11. “The direct jobs are in hotels and convention centers, but thousands more come from those who do set up, sound systems, construction, and other ancillary work. Last year was devastating for everyone who worked in this sector of the economy. The governor can help make sure 2021 and beyond will bring back this industry to where it was prior to the pandemic.”

“Every day I’m on the phone with someone trying to convince them to not cancel and take their business to another state,” said Steve Goodling, President & CEO, Long Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. “We need the governor to provide guidelines to signal to our customers that California will one day be open to hosting events. We want the jobs and revenue here in California, not other states.”

“The lack of guidance on professional meetings in California is devastating our local economy and other states are benefiting,” said Scott White, President & CEO, Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Over 40 meetings representing 13,481 jobs have cancelled so far and we are now losing groups for the fourth quarter of 2021.”

This exploitation is happening because planning and booking for this sector of the economy requires several months and sometimes years of lead time. Convention centers, hotels and other meeting venues can’t compete for *future* events - including the jobs and desperately needed local revenue that come with them - when it appears California is closed indefinitely.

Even if the governor issued guidelines tomorrow, communities and California stand to lose billions more revenue and thousands of hard-working Californians will remain out of work.

“It’s disheartening,” said Mike Testa, President & CEO, Visit Sacramento. “Sacramento has a brand new convention center funded with \$300 million in taxpayer dollars and yet we can’t cement any bookings because California lacks a plan for reopening to events. Potential customers are worried that a lack of guidelines means the rug could get pulled out from under them and their event will be cancelled.”

“We thought 2021 was going to be our rebound year, but unfortunately that’s turning out not to be the case,” said Jay Burress, President & CEO, Visit Anaheim. “Of course, part of this is due to the pandemic, but another is confusion about when California will be allowed to hold meetings and events. The sooner we can get clarity from the governor the better.”

“It is imperative that the state move as quickly as it can to issue thoughtful and responsible guidelines,” said Julie Coker, President & CEO, San Diego Tourism Authority. “There’s too much at stake for California to be the outlier among states with no guidance. The economy is revving up, our clients want to book business meetings and conventions, but we can’t accommodate them. We are losing out on revenue and jobs.”

Every other state released protocols, and many have been safely holding meetings during the pandemic, but California has prohibited meetings of any size since the state’s stay at home order went into effect on March 19, 2020.