

November 2011

To: Washington State Lawmakers
From: The Board of Directors of the Washington Lodging Association
Re: Legislative, Regulatory and Legal Priorities for
Members of the Washington Lodging Association

On behalf of the members of the Washington Lodging Association (WLA), please accept our thanks for reviewing the following issues, important to Washington's lodging industry.

In addressing these issues with you, we're committed to making Washington more hospitable to business . . . and, in so doing, stimulate spending by tourists; increase state and local tax revenues generated by tourists; and help our member businesses --80% of which are considered small business- recover and keep Washingtonians employed.

WLA's members look forward to collaborating with Washington's lawmakers to advance the following industry priorities, in order to:

- Ensure that lodging tax revenues are invested in marketing efforts that result in increased spending --and increased state and local tax revenues-- from travel and tourism.
- Compel the Department of Health to abide by the state statute --which was reinforced just recently in an informal opinion issued by Attorney General McKenna-- that prohibits inspections of rented hotel guestrooms.
- Support a statewide tourism marketing program that has the broad-based financial participation of the tourism industry, and is governed by and accountable to tourism's private sector businesses.
- Support, in perpetuity, a supermajority vote by the legislature to raise any taxes and a simple majority vote to increase fees.
- Promote reform of the Workers' Comp system and protect association-sponsored Retrospective Rating Programs.
- Change the manner in which Workers' Comp premiums are calculated to allow employers to divide employee hours between risk classes.
- Support privatization of liquor sales, ensuring the ability for hoteliers and restaurateurs to purchase directly from manufacturers and negotiate volume discounts.
- Support public policy initiatives that are industry-driven and, through education and incentives, encourage hoteliers to continue greening their properties.

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Working Together We'll Do More for Washington State: The Washington Lodging Association (WLA), incorporated in 1920, is the state's only non-profit trade and professional association dedicated to the interests and improvements of Washington's lodging industry. From its offices in Seattle, WLA serves 500 lodging members, representing 40,000 rooms from across Washington State and more than 125 allied members that provide the industry with necessary products and services.

While working toward a favorable legislative and regulatory environment for the lodging and tourism industry in Washington State, WLA delivers programs and provides resources that benefit its members. In partnership with the newly-created Washington Tourism Alliance, the Association publishes the *Washington State Visitors' Guide*, the official publication for marketing Washington State as a travel destination. WLA sponsors a Workers' Comp retro program that helps members decrease on-the-job accidents and injuries; presents an annual convention and trade show that provides the industry with cutting-edge information and education; and, as the proud recipient of a second grant from the State Department of Ecology, WLA will continue to provide hoteliers statewide with resources to increase their environmental stewardship --and their business opportunities-- by greening their properties.

By working together, we can stimulate tourism -- a major economic engine in Washington State.

Tourism is Washington's 4th largest industry, following software, aerospace, and agriculture-food.

Tourism means business, supporting nearly 145,000 jobs and \$4.3 billion in earnings.

Tourists spend money in our state . . . \$15.2 billion in 2010. And those visitors who stayed overnight in commercial lodging accounted for \$6.5 billion of this overall spending.

Tourists fill Washington's tax coffers . . . contributing \$992M in local and state tax revenues in 2010.

The impact of tourism to Washington's economy is enormous and important. Still, tourism has great untapped potential to stimulate tax revenues and jobs and make an even greater impact on the health of our great state. We look forward to working with you during the 2012 Legislative Session to continue to stimulate the economic impact of Washington's tourism industry.

We appreciate your help regarding the concerns of the lodging industry, businesses large and small from all across the state, committed to keeping Washington working, contributing to the tax base and rebuilding a vibrant quality of life for the visitors, businesses and residents of Washington State.

For additional information and to discuss how legislation you're considering might impact your constituents in the lodging industry, please contact:

- TK Bentler, WLA's lobbyist, 360-352-6061, or by cell at 360-789-1176
- Ian Metz, Grassroots and Legislative Coordinator, 360-584-2337
- Sandra Miller, Vice President and General Manager of the Governor Hotel and Chair of WLA's Government Affairs Committee, 360-352-7700
- A WLA Lodging or Allied Member from your district: call Jan Simon Aridj, WLA President & CEO to connect with a constituent, 877-906-1001