American Hotel & Lodging Association

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

And America's Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Franchise Industries

February 10, 2006

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As representatives of over 450,000 lodging, restaurant and franchise business properties located in every state and congressional district in the country, and with support from our partners in the travel and tourism industry, we are writing you to express our strong support of congressional efforts to provide a comprehensive approach to immigration.

While we applaud Congress for addressing this issue, we are concerned that the immigration reform bill approved by the House (H.R. 4437) which focuses only on enforcement misses the larger issue. Any solution must take a comprehensive approach that both recognizes the realities of our current economy and takes into consideration the importance of immigration in our nation's future economic growth.

The travel and tourism industry is the third largest retail industry in the United States and in 2004 directly provided 7.3 million jobs and generated $163.3 billion in payroll dollars. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) figures released in December 2005, the lodging industry employed almost 1.8 million people in 2004. BLS also projected a 16.4 percent growth rate in the lodging industry which would require more than 300,000 additional employees reaching 2.1 million by 2014.

The restaurant industry is projected to experience similar growth. According to the 2004 BLS figures, the restaurant industry employs approximately 12 million individuals. BLS also projects a 15.8% rate of job growth for restaurants. Based on this rate growth, BLS estimates that the restaurant industry would require an additional 1.9 million workers by the year 2014, thus bringing total restaurant employment to 13.9 million in that year.

According to an economic impact study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the nation's more than 760,000 franchised businesses generate jobs for more than 18 million Americans, which is nearly 14 percent of the nation's private-sector employment. Franchised business account for $1.53 trillion in economic activity, which is 9.5 percent of the private-sector economic output. Over 75 industries franchise and franchise opportunities come in all shapes and sizes, including hotels and restaurants. While the collection of franchise data is a not yet available to project its growth rate, franchising is a robust and growing business model, which depends greatly upon an available and stable workforce to meet it's future demands.

Despite the travel and tourism industry being a vital part of our economy which continues to grow at a high rate, it is facing an unprecedented shortage of labor.

The American birthrate has reached historic lows and the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that it will soon drop below replacement level. The travel and tourism industry is one that relies on personal service and therefore cannot be automated. It is clear that based on our projected growth rates, our industries will require much more labor than that which will be available among those born domestically. Coupled with an aging domestic workforce, the current labor shortage will clearly become much more acute unless additional labor is found.

We believe that any viable immigration proposal must accomplish three objectives: strengthen our national security, reinforce the rule of law and address the current and future labor requirements of our economy.

We firmly believe that our nation's immigration policy should ensure that U.S. workers are not displaced by foreign-born workers, yet after decades of engaging in efforts to encourage native-born Americans to consider careers in the hospitality industry, we are faced with the reality that foreign-born workers are necessary to help fill the jobs where no Americans are available.

Unfortunately, these workers confront extraordinary hurdles to obtaining the required documentation to work in the United States. Current law provides few avenues for employers to access a sustainable supply of essential workers. To address the concerns created by the ongoing influx of undocumented workers, and to keep our nation's economy growing, Congress must deal with the need for a guest worker program that can serve as a legal vehicle to help meet the labor demands of our economy.

Anything short of a comprehensive approach to this challenge will jeopardize any attempt to retake control of our border and truly reform our broken system. Measures limited to only enforcement are doomed to failure – our current immigration system is irrational and unenforceable. Attempts to starve our economy of lower skilled and highly essential labor are counterproductive.

Again, we ask for your support of comprehensive immigration reform that will strengthen our borders, our national security and our economy.

Respectfully Submitted,

(OVER)

The American Hotel & Lodging Association
The National Restaurant Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Travel Business Roundtable
Travel Industry Association
American Gaming Association
Asian American Hotel Owners Association
Destination Marketing Association International
International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions
International Association for Exhibition Management
International Franchise Association
National Business Travel Association
Cendant
Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts
Hershey Entertainment & Resorts
Hyatt Corporation
InterContinental Hotels Group
Marriott International, Inc.
Universal Parks & Resorts
Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retailers Association
Alaska Hotel & Lodging Association
Alaska Restaurant & Beverage Association
Alabama Hospitality Association
Alabama Restaurant Association
Arkansas Hospitality Association
Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association
Arizona Restaurant & Hospitality Association
California Restaurant Association
Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association
Colorado Restaurant Association
Connecticut Restaurant Association
Delaware Restaurant Association
Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association
Georgia Restaurant Association
Hawaii Hotel & Lodging Association
Hawaii Restaurant Association
Iowa Restaurant Association
Idaho Lodging and Restaurant Association
Illinois Restaurant Association
Indiana Hotel & Lodging Association
Restaurant and Hospitality Association of Indiana
Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association
Kentucky Restaurant Association
Louisiana Restaurant Association
Massachusetts Restaurant Association
Restaurant Association of Maryland, Inc.
Maine Innkeepers Association
Maine Restaurant Association
Michigan Hotel, Motel & Resort Association
Michigan Restaurant Association
Minnesota Hotel & Lodging Association
Minnesota Resort & Campground Association
Minnesota Restaurant Association
Missouri Restaurant Association
Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association
Montana Restaurant Association
New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association
North Carolina Restaurant Association
North Dakota State Hospitality Association
Nebraska Restaurant Association
New Hampshire Lodging & Restaurant Association
New Jersey Restaurant Association
New Mexico Restaurant Association
Nevada Hotel & Lodging Association
Nevada Restaurant Association
New York State Restaurant Association
Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association
Ohio Restaurant Association
Oklahoma Hotel and Lodging Association
Oklahoma Restaurant Association
Oklahoma Travel Industry Association
Oregon Restaurant Association
Pennsylvania Restaurant Association
Pennsylvania Tourism & Lodging Association
Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association
Rhode Island Hospitality and Tourism Association
Hospitality Association of South Carolina
South Dakota Retailers Association
Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association, Steamboat Springs, Colorado
Tennessee Hotel & Lodging Association
Tennessee Restaurant Association
Texas Hotel & Lodging Association
Texas Restaurant Association
Utah Restaurant Association
Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association
Washington, DC Convention & Tourism Corporation
Restaurant Association of Metro Washington, Inc.
Vermont Hospitality Association
Washington State Hotel & Lodging Association
Washington Restaurant Association
Wisconsin Innkeepers Association
Wisconsin Restaurant Association
West Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association
Wyoming Lodging and Restaurant Association
Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island, Florida
Auberge du Soleil, Napa Valley, California
Basin Harbor Club, Ferrisburgh, Vermont
Breakers Palm Beach, Palm Beach, Florida
The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, Colorado
Calistoga Ranch, Calistoga, California
Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, Georgia
Chico Hot Springs Resort and Day Spa, Pray, Montana
Cliff House Resort & Spa, Ogunquit, Maine
Enchantment Resort & Mii amo, Sedona, Arizona
Grand Teton Lodge Company, Moran, Wyoming
Harraseeket Inn, Freeport, Maine
Inn at Mystic, Mystic, Connecticut
Inn at Palmetto Bluff, Bluffton, South Carolina
Jack Craver Company, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
Lighthouse Inn, West Dennis, Massachusetts
Madden’s Resort, Brainerd, Minnestota
Mandoki Hospitality Group, Gulf Shores, Alabama
Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York
Otesaga Resort Hotel, Cooperstown, New York
Pebble Beach Resorts, Pebble Beach, California
Port Royal Ocean Resort & Conference Center, Port Aransas, Texas
The Sagamore, Bolton Landing, New York
Skytop Lodge, Skytop, Pennsylvania
Spring Creek Ranch, Jackson, Wyoming
Suncoast Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada
Tides Inn, Irvington, Virginia
Wentworth, Jackson Village, New Hampshire
Woodstock Inn and Resort, Woodstock, Vermont
Yellowstone Inn & Conference Center, Livingston, Montana