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## **2020 AAHOA Virtual Convention & Trade Show Kicks Off**

ATLANTA, Ga., Aug. 11 – Hoteliers, trade show exhibitors, and industry partners from across the country logged on to AAHOA's virtual convention and trade show. The event, originally scheduled to be held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. shifted to the virtual space after the state's Department of Health limited gatherings to fewer than fifty people due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual convention runs from August 11-13.

"This year's convention is a bit different than in years past, but we are optimistic that we are delivering the value our members, vendors, and industry partners have come to expect," said AAHOA Chairman Biran Patel. "In a year when we've seen so many events cancelled, we are proud to take a leading role in the hospitality industry by bringing together hoteliers, vendors, brands, and our industry partners for this virtual event. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we are in a strong position as an association, and we are ready to lead the industry on the road to recovery."

The Convention kicked off with a welcome from Biran Patel followed by addresses from 2019-2020 AAHOA Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala, AAHOA President & CEO Cecil P. Staton, COO & VP for Franchise Relations Rachel Humphrey, and industry legend Harris Rosen. Candidates for AAHOA's open seats on its board of directors delivered speeches, and candidates for AAHOA Secretary participated in a debate. Results will be announced live during the general session on Thursday, August 13. The convention also boasts a virtual trade show which allows members to connect with vendors one-on-one through a video and chat platform. The trade show runs from noon until 5:00 PM EDT on each day of the convention.

Wednesday's and Thursday's general sessions will feature Horst Schulze, Founder of Ritz-Carlton, Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and CEO of OYO Hotels, and panel discussions featuring the CEOs of AAHOA, AHLA, and U.S. Travel Association, state hospitality association CEOs, hospitality data experts and analysts, young professional hoteliers, and some of AAHOA's most seasoned hotel owners.

"When it comes to getting our industry on the road to recovery, AAHOA and America's hoteliers are leading the way. We are incredibly pleased with how this convention came together as we pivoted to the virtual space," said AAHOA President & CEO Cecil P. Staton. "The array of speakers and industry experts will provide attendees with important updates and analysis about the direction in which our industry is headed. The virtual trade show brings vendors and hoteliers together in a way that still allows our members to access the exclusive deals and discounts they've always been able to find on our traditional trade show floor."

**About AAHOA:**

*AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the world. The over 19,500 AAHOA members own almost one in every two hotels in the United States. With billions of dollars in property assets and hundreds of thousands of employees, AAHOA members are core economic contributors in virtually every community. AAHOA is a proud defender of free enterprise and the foremost current-day example of realizing the American dream.*

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