AAHOA Names New President and CEO

ATLANTA, Ga., May 3 – Following a vote by the AAHOA Board of Directors, Laura Lee Blake, Esq., will be the new President and CEO of AAHOA, the nation’s largest hotel owners association, effective May 16, 2022. Blake will succeed Ken Greene, who served in the role for a short time in 2021 and part of 2022. Blake has been an attorney for more than 25 years and most recently was a partner with Connor, Fletcher, and Hedenkamp LLP in Irvine, California. She brings decades of experience in the fields of law, government, business, and academia to AAHOA.

But she isn’t a newcomer to the organization. Blake previously worked for AAHOA for nearly 10 years, from 2005 to 2014, and says it was one of the highlights of her career.

“I was frequently inspired by the work ethic and business acumen of AAHOA Members, and I was surrounded by numerous dedicated Board members, executive staff, and team members – many of whom are still my friends today,” incoming President and CEO Laura Lee Blake said. “AAHOA Members embody the American dream. They exhibit how success is possible with hard work and an opportunity to grow and expand their businesses under our free enterprise system. There is simply no place like AAHOA to make a real difference for our members, hotel owners, and the industry at large.”

During her time with AAHOA, Blake advocated on members’ behalf, worked with officials at the Federal, State, and local levels to pass laws and regulations that would protect the interests of hoteliers and small business owners, promoted fair franchising, hosted franchise law educational sessions, spoke to members about their legal rights, and much more.

“Of course, I was never alone in these endeavors, since there were countless Board members, the AAHOA president and executive team, and committed volunteers who
supported the work," Blake said, “But in the end, we achieved significant things, and it was a fantastic 10 years working with AAHOA.”

As the incoming President and CEO of AAHOA, Blake has the vision to continue to build on the strength and unity of the AAHOA Members.

“With the resurgence of interest in AAHOA’s 12 Points of Fair Franchising and the future of franchising in general, this is a perfect opportunity to return to AAHOA and open the dialogue with the leading franchisors for the benefit of our members, the brands, and all of the franchise systems,” Blake said. “It’s a great time to follow the lead of our members in building and expanding on the influence of this great association to have a lasting impact for years to come.”

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concerning effect it had on the travel industry, as with any organization, difficulties can arise in reconfiguring the operational structure of AAHOA to ensure efficiency and maximum impact.

“As I step into this new role, my immediate task will be to help lead AAHOA as it relaunches its operational mission and moves forward to achieve its goals, with guidance and strategic direction from the AAHOA Board of Directors,” explained Blake. “From rebuilding the AAHOA Team and refocusing our tactical priorities to preparing for an incredible Regional season and continuing AAHOA’s efforts...
around fair franchising, I’m ready to hit the ground running and can’t think of anywhere else I’d rather be.”

Over the years as an attorney, Blake often formed strong, lasting relationships with her clients because she believed in their causes and wanted to do her best to bring them successful results. The AAHOA Board of Directors is confident Blake will take this same approach and apply it to the AAHOA Members as she steps into her new role.

“We are so excited to have Laura Lee back as part of the AAHOA family,” said AAHOA Chairman Neal Patel. “Whether it’s evaluating the franchisor-franchisee relationship to determine how best to improve the ROI so it’s more enticing for our members, to promoting fair franchising that will benefit both sides, or hosting franchise law educational sessions, her in-depth knowledge, experience, and advocacy work are just what this organization needs to take our franchising advocacy efforts to the next level. Plus, she will be assisting with prioritizing strategies for legislative advocacy and building alliances with those who understand and support the travel industry. This is a critical time for AAHOA, and Laura Lee will play a key role in getting the job done.”

“I’m excited to be AAHOA’s next President and CEO, grateful for the Board’s support and faith in me, and deeply committed to serving this great organization,” Blake said. “With its more than 20,000 members who own 60% of all hotels in the U.S., I am truly honored to have a role in strengthening the position of AAHOA to serve as the one and only voice and foremost advocate for America’s hotel owners.”

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**About AAHOA**

AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the nation, with Member-owned properties representing a significant part of the U.S. economy. AAHOA’s 20,000 members own 60% of the hotels in the United States and are responsible for 1.7% of the nation’s GDP. More than one million employees work at AAHOA Member-owned hotels, earning $47 billion annually, and member-owned hotels support 4.2 million U.S. jobs across all sectors of the hospitality industry. AAHOA’s mission is to advance and protect the business interests of hotel owners through advocacy, industry leadership, professional development, member benefits, and community engagement.