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## **AAHOA's Spring National Advocacy Conference Brings Together Lawmakers and 200+ AAHOA Members Strongly Advocating for the Hospitality Industry**

WASHINGTON, D.C., Mar. 10 – Hundreds of Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) Members and leaders from across the United States flew into Washington D.C. for AAHOA's Spring National Advocacy Conference (SNAC) earlier this week to discuss critical issues impacting America's hotel owners.

As the premier voice of hotel owners, AAHOA seeks to partner with elected officials in Washington, D.C. to identify viable solutions to the biggest challenges facing the industry. The 2023 AAHOA SNAC provided the opportunity for America's hoteliers to meet with and cultivate relationships with more than 200 elected officials in Washington, D.C.

AAHOA Members focused on obtaining greater access to capital and addressing the severe labor shortages plaguing the industry. AAHOA leaders helped expand lawmakers' knowledge around the importance of hotels to their communities and the economy at large. When AAHOA Members receive assistance, their local business communities see an uptick in employment rates, profitability, state and local tax contributions, and business sustainability.

"It was an honor to attend my final advocacy conference as Chairman of AAHOA. We brought nearly 200 AAHOA leaders to Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of our industry and on behalf of AAHOA's 20,000 members," **said AAHOA Chairman Nishant (Neal) Patel.** "Creating relationships with our elected officials is a top priority for AAHOA, and we will continue to work on your behalf, strengthening relationships so we can continue to represent the entire hospitality industry with your best interests at heart."

Political affiliations aside, those in attendance were representing the interests and issues that are important to America's hoteliers and the broader travel and hospitality industry.

"AAHOA provides a platform to voice our concerns by continuing to strengthen its position and influence in the hospitality industry, as well as in key political circles at the federal, state, and local levels," **said AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake.** "We are making a true difference for the benefit of our members, and it is fantastic to see the impact we are having. I know policymakers will remember us the next time they make decisions affecting the hospitality industry."

To ensure the sustainability of hotels and the broader American travel industry, AAHOA Members urged Congress to support the following four issues:

- **Promote access to capital by increasing SBA loan caps/limits**
  - **SBA 7(a) and 504 Loan Limits to \$10 Million:** Obtaining access to capital is a critical factor for small businesses to operate and thrive in a challenging economy. Currently, Small Business Administration (SBA) 7(a) and 504 loans are capped at \$5 million, which

was last set in 2010. For hoteliers, the costs of constructing and purchasing properties have skyrocketed over the past decade.

- **Permanently Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**
  - **Business owners across the country face critical labor shortages.** Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) improvements affecting workers without children that expired at the end of 2021 should be made permanent.
  
- **Address the industry's labor shortage by significantly increasing the number of H-2B visas and creating a new H-2C visa.**
  - **Address the Hospitality Labor Shortage with H-2B visas:** The unemployment rate in the leisure and hospitality sector is 5.2%, which is 36% higher than the 3.6% overall unemployment rate for the country, according to the latest [February 2023 data](#) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
  - **The Biden Administration announced its expansion of an additional 64,000 temporary nonagricultural worker H-2B visas for FY 2023.** This is in addition to the 66,000 H-2B visas that are normally available each year. However, the total number of available visas does not come close to the estimated 1.5 million open jobs in the industry.
  - **AAHOA seeks for Congress to:** Eliminate caps on the H-2B visa program altogether so there are no constraints on addressing employers' needs for additional seasonal workers. Also, if an already-approved worker is brought back, they should not be counted against the cap of a new visa.
  - **Allow these visas to be valid for multiple years,** so businesses do not have to undergo the onerous filing process every year.
  
- **Cosponsor the Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act**
  - **The Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act (EWEA)** would help business owners address the critical labor shortage by filling a need currently unaddressed in the U.S. immigration system.
  - **The EWEA creates an H-2C visa program for nonimmigrant, nonagricultural service workers.** It is intended for small businesses in industries with lower educational thresholds and comparatively low sales per employee.

AAHOA further offers numerous opportunities for elected officials to utilize and learn about the needs of AAHOA Members and to speak directly with key constituents back home. These include attending regional conference meetings and speaking at AAHOA town halls as well as participating in interviews with Today's Hotelier, AAHOA's monthly magazine distributed to 20,000 Hoteliers.

AAHOA rounded out the event with a HerOwnership Panel with Sonali Desai, Executive Director of the House Democratic Caucus, along with Women Hotelier Directors Lina Patel and Tejal Patel. This panel was held in celebration of International Women's Day, and focused on championing women in entrepreneurship in D.C. and giving women hoteliers the tools to take charge of their hospitality careers.

To learn more about AAHOA's policy priorities and issues advocated for at the 2023 AAHOA SNAC, download our [Spring National Advocacy Conference Policy Backgrounder and Guide](#).



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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.*