

today's hotelier

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The Official Publication of AAHOA



The power of AAHOA's Advocacy

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Staunch AAHOA Supporter Representative Young Kim (CA-40)

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Understanding the
**AAHOA
PAC**
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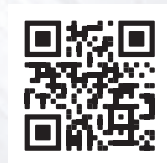
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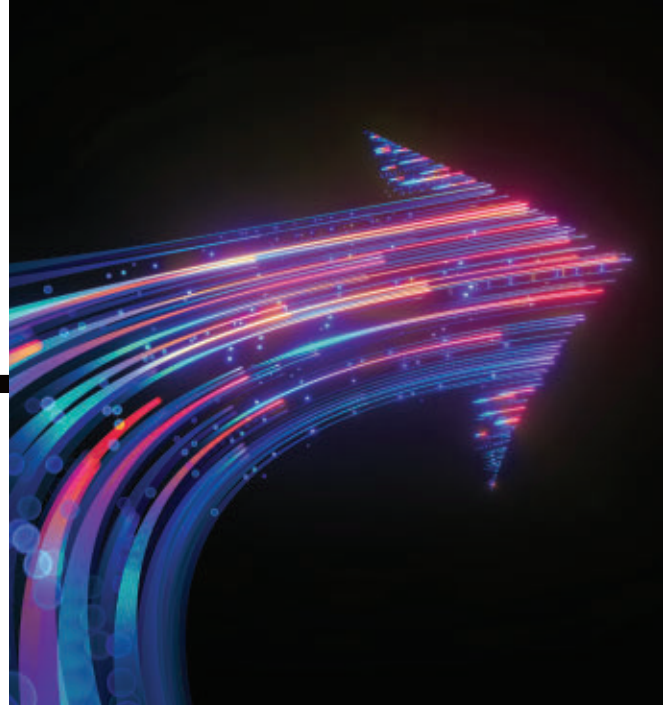
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5 Things to Know About AAHOA This Month

1 ARE YOU PREPARED FOR DISASTERS?

September is National Preparedness Month, observed to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time. AAHOA offers disaster planning and preparedness resources, including signing up your hotel for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Lodging Assistance program. You can find them at bit.ly/4c073Ry.



4 AVOIDING FOODBORNE ILLNESSES – TIPS FOR FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION MONTH

The U.S. government estimates that there are about 48 million cases of foodborne illness annually – that’s about one in six Americans each year. These illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths annually. Food Safety Education Month is observed in September to bring awareness of the importance of food safety. An article in *Today’s Hotelier* provides guidance on protecting your guests and hotel from foodborne illnesses. Find six tips on food safety at bit.ly/4c6Gfza.

2 AAHOA TO SHINE BRIGHT AS PLATINUM SPONSOR AT THE LODGING CONFERENCE

Thousands of influential hotel owners and executives, including AAHOA leaders, will attend The Lodging Conference, Oct 7-10, at The JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa in Phoenix, AZ. In 2023, the conference drew more than 2,700 attendees. AAHOA is proud to support this renowned event as a Platinum Sponsor and have its leadership team in attendance. Register to attend at LodgingConference.com.



3 CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL HOUSEKEEPERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES WEEK


Held during the second week of September, International Housekeeping Week recognizes the efforts of hard-working custodial staff members. AAHOA is proud to acknowledge the hard work of all housekeeping and environmental services staff. Here are a few ideas to celebrate: IEHA.org/IHW.



5 SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT AAHOA VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Your voice is a powerful tool! Sharing the news about impactful good work done by AAHOA isn’t just easy; it’s also a significant way for AAHOA Members to contribute. We encourage members to follow us on all social media platforms to share their crucial role in the country’s largest hotel owners association with their friends and family. AAHOA social media includes [@AAHOAofficial on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/AAHOAofficial), [@AAHOAofficial on TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/@AAHOAofficial), [@AAHOAofficial on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/AAHOAofficial), [@AAHOA on X, LinkedIn, and YouTube](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AAHOA), and [WhatsApp at AAHOA.com/WhatsApp](https://AAHOA.com/WhatsApp). Your shares make a difference. ■

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MIRAJ S. PATEL,
MBA, CHO, CHIA
AAHOA CHAIRMAN (2024-2025)

“

Our unity, our shared purpose, is our strength; together, we can effect meaningful change for hoteliers nationwide.”

Together, we win

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – *Margaret Mead*

WHEN IT COMES TO AAHOA’S ADVOCACY EFFORTS, EACH SMALL action from our members can have a profound impact, underscoring the importance of your individual contributions.

Hopefully, you’ve noticed the phrase “Small Role, Big Impact” in recent Advocacy Action Alerts sent from AAHOA. This motto is a powerful reminder that simple actions, like sending a letter to a member of Congress supporting a bill, can yield significant results.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of its 20,000 members, AAHOA shines in grassroots engagement. This is evident in the enthusiastic responses to our Advocacy Action Alerts, the robust attendance at our Fall and Spring National Advocacy Conferences, impressive growth in AAHOA’s PAC fundraising efforts, and the remarkable 50+ Town Halls held across the nation each year.

To better support you, we have introduced two invaluable tools for our members to ensure the continued success of AAHOA’s advocacy efforts.

1: ADVOCACY ACTION ALERT CENTER

First, we’re pleased to unveil our new Advocacy Action Alert Center. This platform is designed to equip you with the necessary resources to engage with your representatives, share your personal experiences directly, and champion AAHOA’s top legislative priorities. It works by providing you with pre-drafted letter templates and contact information of your representatives, making it easier for you to voice your concerns. This powerful tool amplifies your voice, significantly enhancing our collective advocacy impact.

A heartfelt thank you goes to the members who responded to one of our recent Action Alerts. Your support for the *No Hidden Fees on Extra Expenses for Stays (FEES) Act*, which aims to regulate additional fees charged by hotels, was crucial in securing its recent passage in the U.S. House. This success exemplifies the strength of AAHOA’s grassroots advocacy. This year alone, we’ve issued five federal Action Alerts, resulting in our members sending more than 2,000 letters to federal elected officials.

2: IN YOUR CORNER ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER

We are also excited to introduce our new monthly advocacy newsletter, *In Your Corner*. This newsletter is your essential resource for staying updated on our advocacy initiatives, discovering opportunities to get involved, and reading inspiring stories of how fellow members make a tangible difference. The positive feedback we’ve received so far is encouraging, and we look forward to sharing more success stories in the coming months.

Remember, when each of us plays a small role, we collectively make a significant impact. Our unity, our shared purpose, is our strength; together, we can effect meaningful change for hoteliers nationwide. ■



LAURA LEE BLAKE, ESQ.
AAHOA PRESIDENT & CEO

Passion and purpose

“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.” – *Dolores Huerta*

“

As the voice of more than 60% of all U.S. hotel owners, our AAHOA Members must work with lawmakers to implement changes that will lift the industry.”

THIS MONTH, NEARLY 250 AAHOA MEMBERS WILL JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON, DC, for our annual Fall National Advocacy Conference (FNAC), a cornerstone event in our advocacy efforts. This pilgrimage to the nation’s capital is not just a tradition but a powerful demonstration of the unity and determination within our community to influence public policy and champion the interests of hotel owners across the United States.

AA UNIFIED VOICE IN THE NATION’S CAPITAL

As we commemorate our 35th anniversary, it is essential to recognize the milestones in our advocacy work. AAHOA has always placed significant importance on engaging with lawmakers in our nation’s capital. We initiated our first Legislative Action Summit in D.C. in 2000 and our first Legislative Day, including a reception for members of Congress, in 2006. These events paved the way for what we now know as FNAC and the Spring National Advocacy Conference (SNAC), demonstrating the collective impact of our advocacy work. The presence of AAHOA Members in Washington, DC, sends a powerful message: Hotel owners are engaged, informed, and ready to advocate for their interests. Your contributions and dedication have been instrumental in shaping the future of our industry, and we must continue to play an active role in the political process.

EMPOWERING OUR MEMBERS

These events are vital for AAHOA, the industry, and our members. By inviting our members to Washington, AAHOA gains influence and recognition as the industry’s authentic voice. Without our members sharing their stories, the voices, concerns, and needs of the country’s hotel owners would go unheard and unaddressed.

One example of our members being heard is the proposed *Loans in Our Neighborhoods (LIONS) Act* (bit.ly/3W8Kowm), designed to amend the *Small Business Act* (SBA) by increasing the maximum loan amount for section 7(a) loans from \$5M to \$10M. Rep. Shri Thanedar (MI-13) introduced the bill because of AAHOA’s advocacy efforts. Meeting face-to-face with lawmakers is the bridge that connects passion to policy.

THE IMPACT OF SHOWING UP

As the voice of more than 60% of all U.S. hotel owners, our AAHOA Members must work with lawmakers to implement changes that will lift the industry. As AAHOA Members speak about the pressing issues, they build personal connections with the top lawmakers in this country. These relationships are not just about one-time meetings but about fostering ongoing dialogues that can influence policy decisions throughout the year. This is where your influence and power lie. The long-term impact will be immense and allow AAHOA to serve the industry for many future generations. ■

Fighting for the American Dream

Representative Young Kim is a fierce industry advocate and AAHOA ally

by CARTER DAVIS

ELECTED AS ONE OF THE FIRST Korean American women in Congress, Rep. Young Kim (CA-40) is no stranger to blazing a trail for others while working to make California's 40th District the best it can be. With

that fighting spirit, it's little wonder why she's become a staunch supporter of AAHOA and its mission of leveling the playing field for everyone in the industry.

As a longtime small-business owner herself, Rep. Kim knows well the struggles facing the American economy and has



put her full effort into drafting and supporting legislation that increases access to capital, eliminates unnecessary fees, and reduces taxes.

During her first term on Capitol Hill, Rep. Kim was able to pass close to 30 bills out of the House with more than a dozen signed into law. According to the Center for Effective Lawmaking, her record was ranked among the most effective in Congress, and she received the Bipartisan Policy Center's Legislative Action Award.

Among other current efforts, she's currently championing H.R. 6543, the *No Hidden Fees on Extra Expenses for Stays (FEES) Act*, a bill supported by AAHOA that would require providers of short-term lodging to clearly disclose mandatory fees.

Much like AAHOA Members, Rep. Kim wears many hats – immigrant, small-business owner, community leader, former California Assemblywoman, mother, and grandmother – and is fighting hard “to help all Americans have the chance to achieve their dream.”

WHAT LED YOU TO BECOMING ACTIVE IN GOVERNMENT? WAS THERE A SPECIFIC CROSSROADS, OR WAS IT THE CUMULATIVE RESULT OF NUMEROUS EVENTS?

As an immigrant, I believe in giving back to my community and my country that has provided me so many opportunities, and I taught my children the same values. My family emigrated from South Korea to the island of Guam, and I remember walking along the beach as a young girl with my mom to pick up cans and bottles. We would bring back any money we made from recycling to our church as our way of giving back to the community that welcomed us. As immigrants and Asian Americans, this is embedded in who we are.

However, I never would've thought a girl like me would end up serving in the California State Assembly and U.S. House of Representatives. I graduated from USC, worked as a bank controller, started a small business, and raised my family before I got involved in public service

when I met then-State Senator Ed Royce through my husband's nonprofit, Korean American Coalition. Before I knew it, I was working in his state Senate office in community relations and Asian affairs. When he was elected to Congress, I went with him. I was able to focus on issues important to our AAPI community and foster U.S.-Asia relations as he was on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Two decades later, in 2012, he said “We need to find a candidate to run against this Democrat state Assembly member” who had just won. I said, “Sure, I'll look for somebody.” And he said, “Look no further; you will be great.” And I said, “Huh?” And that's when I ran for the California State Assembly. When he retired, I ran for Congress. I didn't plan to be here, but I'm honored to serve the community I've called home for decades. This is not a job I take lightly, and I'm working hard to keep the American Dream I've lived alive for future generations.

AS ONE OF THE FIRST KOREAN AMERICAN WOMEN TO SERVE IN CONGRESS, CAN YOU SPEAK TO THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOVERNMENT MADE UP OF INDIVIDUALS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS?

We all have our unique stories and journeys, and the more different perspectives we have at the table in Congress, the more we can ensure policies passed by Congress do the most amount of good as possible.



I came to Congress in 2021, and every seat won by a Republican was won by a woman, minority, or veteran. I think this is a very good thing. Also, 2021 was when we saw a rise in AAPI hate crimes. I learned quickly the need to speak out and that my voice is important to educate my colleagues about not just my district, but also my AAPI community.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY PLAY IN YOUR CALIFORNIA AT LARGE AND YOUR DISTRICT, SPECIFICALLY?

California's hospitality industry is one of the largest in the country and is critical for local economies in my district, with tourists visiting to see sites from the Nixon Library and the Anaheim Angels to Disneyland and beaches.

WHAT'S THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NO HIDDEN FEES ACT, AND HOW WOULD THIS LEGISLATION AFFECT HOTELIERS?

As we see persistent inflation costing Americans more for everything, budgeting and saving up for trips can be much more difficult for families. The last thing we need is to be hit with costly fees at the end that mislead consumers. That's why I introduced the *No Hidden Fees on Extra Expenses for Stays (No Hidden FEES) Act* of 2023, to improve cost transparency for stays in short-term lodging, such as hotels, motels, and inns. The *No Hidden FEES Act* prohibits unfair or misleading price advertising for short-term lodging and requires accurate price listings that include all mandatory and resort fees up front.

For hoteliers, that means ensuring prices for any of their rooms or suites include all fees, excluding government taxes, that may be added. This provides certainty and saves time for families planning their vacations and comparing lodging options and increases trust between the hoteliers and consumers.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL IS AN ENORMOUS ISSUE FOR HOTELIERS RIGHT NOW. HOW CAN WE MAKE IT EASIER FOR HOTELIERS TO SECURE FINANCING FOR NEW PROJECTS?

Expanding access to capital for small business owners, especially for minority and women entrepreneurs who often face additional hurdles, is a top priority of mine in Congress. Part of this means creating clear guidelines, which is why I introduced the *Small Dollar Loan Certainty Act* to provide clear principles for financial institutions providing small-dollar loans and ensure working Americans can access the capital they need. Congress should also examine increasing the current cap of \$5M of the

Small Business Administration's 7(a) loan program.

Unfortunately, the current cap hasn't increased in many years and doesn't take into account high inflation rates not seen in decades. This change could unlock more capital for hoteliers to pay for higher expenses. Finally, we also need to ensure small business owners are aware of resources available to them. I encourage you to contact your local small business development center (SBDC) and look for any grant programs available as well.

HOW WOULD YOU ADVISE SMALL-BUSINESS OWNERS LOOKING TO MAKE A CONNECTION WITH THEIR ELECTED LEADERS IN WASHINGTON?

Reach out to your representative, whether it's on a legislative issue or if you need assistance cutting through red tape with the Small Business Administration. Get involved with your local chambers to meet other small business owners, expand your network, and find like-minded individuals to form a collective voice on issues. Don't be afraid to speak out and have your voice heard.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SMALL-BUSINESS OWNERS THINKING ABOUT RUNNING FOR ELECTED OFFICE?

Do it! As small business owners, we have important perspectives to share, especially when it comes to creating policies and conducting oversight on regulations and rules from federal agencies. Policies should make life easier for small business owners, not harder. Small business owners have proven to be resilient too through the COVID-19 pandemic and now with persistent inflation, labor shortages, and supply chain shortages. Having small business owners at the table is the nation's gain. ■



Rep. Young Kim addresses attendees at AAHOA's 2024 Spring National Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC.

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**MORE PRODUCTION.
LESS CONSUMPTION.**

Building a better future

By contributing to AAHOA PAC, hoteliers are advocating for their industry

by NICK FORTUNA

LIVING IN A BATTLEGROUND STATE, Chintan Patel knows he'll see political advertisements whenever he turns on the television this fall. But Patel, a hotel owner and consultant, isn't just sitting back and watching the political debates play out; he's among the AAHOA Members trying to shape them for the good of the industry.

Patel, based in Cary, NC, is the principal of Arris Hospitality, which owns and operates seven hotels, and is the founder of Hospitality Consultants. He said he's donated to AAHOA's Political Action Committee each year since 2018, recognizing in U.S. elections, the candidate with the larger bankroll has a considerable edge, and only the winners get to enact public policy.

For the past two years, Patel has donated \$5,000 to AAHOA PAC, the maximum allowed by the Federal Election Commission. He noted that during AAHOA's frequent visits to Capitol Hill, the association touts its strength in numbers, with its 20,000 hoteliers owning 60% of hotels in the

Educate Yourself on PAC!

Interested in learning more about PAC, including answers
to the most frequently asked questions?
Scan the QR code below to find out more.



“

If members want to make a difference, they have to get involved, and this is the first step. If they don't get involved, their voices will not be heard.”

Host a **Back-of-the-House** Tour!

Hosting a Back-of-the-House Tour remains one of the easiest and best ways to forge a lasting connection with legislators, and it provides them a firsthand experience, allowing them to witness the positive and irreplaceable impact small businessowners have on their communities.

Scan the QR code below to fill out an application form and host a legislator at your property.



United States. When it comes to campaign contributions, however, AAHOA Members sometimes punch below their weight, he said.

AAHOA'S PAC IS OUR VOICE

According to Open Secrets, which tracks political contributions, AAHOA PAC had donated \$345,400 to political candidates and parties this year through July 15, ranking 10th in the hospitality industry. Meanwhile, Airbnb Inc., which is lobbying to avoid the burdensome regulations placed on hotels, ranks eighth in the industry with \$400,781 in contributions this year, as of this writing.

For AAHOA to amplify the voices of its members, the association needs hoteliers to step into the policy arena, and that means opening their checkbooks.

“The last two years, I've made sure to donate the max, mainly because others don't, so I try to make up for them,” Patel said. “If members want to make a difference, they have to get involved, and this is the first step. If they don't get involved, their voices will not be heard.”

Formed in 1998, AAHOA PAC made its first political contributions in 2004, sending \$4,000 to then-U.S. Rep. Bobby Jindal (R-LA) and \$1,000 to the late Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV). Since then, AAHOA PAC has donated more than \$1 million to politicians on both sides of the aisle, seeking to elect candidates who will prioritize the needs of hoteliers and other small-business owners.

AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake said the PAC is the association's main vehicle for advancing the legislative interests of members, and there's a lot at stake in every election cycle. As an example, she pointed to the *Loans in Our Neighborhoods (LIONS) Act*, introduced into the House of Representatives by Rep. Shri Thanedar (D-MI) in February.

That bill, which AAHOA supports, would double the maximum amount for section 7(a) loans from the Small Business Administration to \$10 million, providing greater financial support to small businesses. Although it has

some bipartisan support, the legislation is stuck in committee.

At the same time, AAHOA and its PAC are fighting against the Biden administration's new overtime rule, which would expand eligibility for overtime pay to all workers making less than \$58,656 a year, up from the current \$35,568. The new earnings threshold would take effect in January and would be raised every three years, substantially increasing labor costs for hoteliers.

Republicans are seeking to block that Department of Labor rule, with Rep. Tim Walberg of Michigan and Sen. Mike Braun of Indiana leading the charge.

With those issues and more up for debate, AAHOA PAC needs members to put skin in the game, Blake said.

“Money talks, and AAHOA's PAC is our voice,” she said. “We need a strong PAC to support the elected officials who will be our champions. It is a blessing to give to the PAC and see the changes AAHOA is making. With a strong PAC, we can get our industry on track to accomplish important things. That is why I give \$5,000. I want to be part of an exciting change that helps our members.”

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Donors to AAHOA PAC can have confidence their money is being spent wisely, according to AAHOA's Senior Director of Government Affairs, Daniel New. AAHOA has implemented a points system to score candidates according to their positions on issues affecting hoteliers. Members also may suggest candidates at the local, state, or national level whom they believe are worthy of donations, and the Government Affairs Committee will vet those candidates thoroughly, he said.

“There's been so much focus on the presidential race this year, but there are so many other important races happening in Congress and on the state and local levels that also will impact our members,” New said. “AAHOA PAC supports those candidates who are willing to listen to us, to make sure our voice is heard, and will carry our message to their colleagues.”



Danny Gaekwad, a prominent hotelier and real estate developer based in Ocala, FL, said he's contributed to AAHOA PAC for many years, understanding political engagement "is a long process." He said AAHOA PAC's push for liability protections from frivolous lawsuits and to have Airbnb properties held to the same business standards as hotels are especially important for hoteliers.

"There's an old saying in politics that if you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu, and a lot of people don't wake up until they're on the menu," said Gaekwad, a past chairman of the Government Affairs Committee.

Montu Patel, CEO of New Hope, PA-based Innovative Hospitality Management, said he views his contributions to AAHOA PAC "as a long-term insurance policy on our business, making sure over time, the right regulations and legislation are put in place to ensure that our hotels are viable businesses in the future."

Patel, whose company owns and operates 11 hotels, said he wants changes to federal immigration policies that would alleviate the stubborn labor shortage plaguing hotels. On the local level, he's concerned about regulations that would limit the duration of guests' hotel stays, which would be a blow to operators of extended-stay properties.

In addition to donating to AAHOA PAC, Patel encouraged members to stay engaged with their local representatives through emails, letters, phone calls, and AAHOA's visits to Capitol Hill and state capitals. Members also should invite elected officials to tour their hotels and see the impact their businesses are making on local communities, he said.

"We need to focus on continuing to increase our voice so we're not forgotten," said Patel, an AAHOA Ambassador for the Mid Atlantic region. "We have an opportunity to take back the reins of hotel-related legislation by working with our legislators and helping craft responsible legislation that allows us to continue to succeed in this sector."

THE ISSUES THAT MATTER

Imesh Vaidya, CEO of Albuquerque, NM-based Premier Hospitality, said state and local increases to the minimum wage, including Denver's rate of \$18.29 per hour, are posing a threat to small businesses. Similarly, state efforts to give all workers paid sick and family leave would place financial and administrative burdens on hoteliers, he said.

Those issues illustrate why it's vital for AAHOA Members to donate to the PAC and pay attention to state and local political races, said Vaidya, whose company owns and operates nine hotels.

"You have to be at the table to present both sides of any story, which, unfortunately, requires funds," he said. "It's important we let local and national legislators

know some of these policies aren't feasible for most small businesses."

G.J. Zala, CEO of Bakersfield, CA-based Hill House Hospitality, said AAHOA PAC has been an effective advocate for hoteliers large and small, which is why he continues to contribute. Zala, whose company owns and operates four hotels, said the association's push for human-trafficking awareness and prevention is among its success stories.

"AAHOA is doing great work for every hotelier, and members are benefiting," he said. "But without contributions to the PAC, how can we be effective at lobbying?" ■

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PAC today!

The AAHOA PAC gives AAHOA the opportunity to advocate on behalf of its members on Capitol Hill and in state capitals across the country. AAHOA PAC would cease to exist without continual contributions and support from our members.

To support AAHOA's work in helping small-business owners in the hospitality industry, visit <https://aahoa.com/advocacy/government-affairs/about-aahoa-pac>

Stand up, be counted

The power of AAHOA's advocacy and the need for member involvement

by ZOHREEN ISMAIL



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I**N HIS 1963 SPEECH, MARTIN LUTHER KING** Jr. said, “There is power in unity, and there is power in numbers.” There are numerous examples from our world’s history of diverse communities coming together to support and fight for a cause they believe in. This type of advocacy is strong even today and prevalent within AAHOA.

With more than 20,000 hoteliers who regularly support one another in professional development and other interests, *Today’s Hotelier* magazine interviewed two team members involved at the grassroots level working to bring change not only for hotel owners but for the entire hospitality industry.

“Our members are business owners,” said AAHOA Senior Director of Government Affairs, Daniel New. “All our priorities center on assisting our members to increase their capital, save them capital, and/or protect their investment.”





A Sampling

of AAHOA's 2024 federal, state, and local priorities

Federal

- Access to capital through SBA 7a loan program
- Join employer rule by the Department of Labor
- Overtime rule by the Department of Labor
- Cost of credit card swipe fees

State & Local

- Short-term rental platforms and online travel agencies
- Innkeeper/guest relationships
- Liability protections
- Human trafficking prevention
- Homelessness crisis
- Lodging tax for tourism

Many AAHOA Members have seen the advocacy work thus far come to fruition. An example of this is the successful amended language that would provide hoteliers with clearer guidelines on what a guest/innkeeper relationship turns into a landlord/tenant relationship. AAHOA partnered with the New Jersey Restaurant & Hospitality Association to benefit hoteliers with legal clarity, operational efficiency, risk mitigation, and more. "We look forward to working with all interested parties on this issue in hopes of having this become law," New said.

REACHING ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Although AAHOA advocacy has countless success stories, there's no shortage of hurdles ahead. "Educating elected officials about our members is one of our largest challenges," New explained. "Many elected officials have never operated a hotel. We're working to make sure elected officials know that our members are the example of the American Dream."

One way to address these, and other, challenges is by working with politicians from across the political spectrum. "AAHOA continues to build out its relationships with elected officials interested in being pro-AAHOA and actively supporting AAHOA's initiatives," said Neal A. Patel, managing partner of Patel Partners, a DC-based lobbying firm that represents AAHOA. "We welcome those voices to partner with AAHOA."

New continued to share a huge multi-effort bi-partisan win in Georgia. The passage of commercial property-assessed clean energy space passed overwhelmingly with support from both sides of the political lines allowing members to save capital for improvements they must make or want to make to ensure guests have the best experience at their hotels.

ENGAGING WITH POLICYMAKERS

AAHOA takes a strategic approach to engaging with policymakers and legislators across the political spectrum. Because of AAHOA's level of sophistication, it can approach the issue from multiple angles, including direct contact with policymakers and legislators, annual fly-ins, hosting Town Halls, email action alerts, and more.

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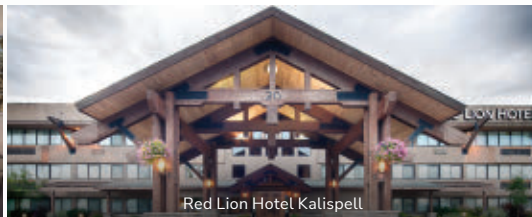


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AAHOA Members also partake in Back-of-the-House Tours of their properties where they invite members of Congress to come and tour hotels.

It's essential to take a multi-pronged approach when engaging with policymakers to make a lasting impact. In the first quarter of 2024, AAHOA shined a light on the Federal Trade Commission to closely watch the proposed Choice-Wyndham merger. "AAHOA sounded the alarm on this merger," Patel said, "and provided invaluable data to senators and the FTC as to the repercussions of the merger." This type of quick action and communication is essential and AAHOA is able to mobilize to make a positive impact on the industry.

THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT HOTELIERS

"AAHOA's foundation and legacy is built on the role small and independent hotel owners have played," Patel said. That's why the advocacy efforts are constantly fighting for independent hoteliers as well on key issues like access to capital and lowering credit card swipe fees, which are important to small and independent hotels.

Many of the leadership within AAHOA – such as chairs past, present, and future – trace their success back to being small or independent hoteliers. These hoteliers often are embedded in their local communities, and their involvement in advocacy can provide powerful grassroots support. The stories and experiences they share resonate with lawmakers and emphasize the real-world impact of policy decisions.

A MEMORABLE WIN

When asked to share a memorable experience in relation to AAHOA's advocacy efforts, New was quick to share an experience from Augusta, GA. "There has been an issue with hoteliers not receiving support from local law enforcement in the removal of guests who haven't paid," he explained. "After multiple meetings and testimony, the commissioners were prepared and looking for a way to help our hoteliers. The sheriff's office issued a policy stating their office would assist."

The gratitude from the AAHOA Members poured in. Shedding light on this issue and receiving positive feedback from local officials was a big win that New is proud and grateful for today allowing for a positive impact for all hoteliers.

"These accomplishments are only the start of much greater things to come," says New.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW (AND DO) RIGHT NOW

Things in the hospitality industry and the political landscape of our country are constantly moving. On a state level (which typically moves quicker than the federal level), there are always a variety of policy changes that members need to be aware of. Things like:

- Minimum wage increases in California
- Human trafficking prevention for hotel and vacation rentals in North Carolina

- Access to commercial property-assessed clean energy in Georgia

All these issues should be top-of-mind for hoteliers as they could save business owners millions of dollars.

AAHOA's advocacy efforts and impact are continuously growing and involvement from members goes a long way. The increased engagement in instances like volunteering to host Back-of-the-House Tours, answering action alerts and sending letters to elected officials, and attending fly-ins have all yielded positive results. "Our members are being sought to serve on boards, committees, and task forces because of their knowledge and expertise," New said. "This shows our members' voices are being heard and listened to."

The AAHOA PAC is another key part of the industry's support system. It stands as a public show of support to those who are willing to listen and be a voice for the industry allowing members to educate and voice opinions on issues in open forums.

"The AAHOA PAC has been rejuvenated," Patel said. "It's a strong tool to ensure elected officials see the commitment level AAHOA Members have to advocacy and the organization itself."

THE EFFORTS CONTINUE

The advocacy efforts set forth by AAHOA will continue to focus on issues that directly affect the members. "Our members are a driving force," New said, "Through our Officers, Board of Directors, and general communications from our membership, we review what issues could have the largest impact on our members' bottom lines and their ability to conduct day-to-day operations."

The active engagement and support of hoteliers is an invaluable contribution that strengthens AAHOA's position and allows the voices of hoteliers to be heard. ■

New! Monthly advocacy newsletter from AAHOA

AAHOA recently introduced its new advocacy eNewsletter, *In Your Corner*. Staying active and engaged in AAHOA is crucial. This newsletter will provide you with the latest updates on our advocacy efforts, opportunities to get involved, and stories of how members are making an impact.

Learn more and read the latest issue at **AAHOA.com/Alerts**.



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Business-minded

Get to know Rep. Chuck Edwards (R-NC)

by NEAL A. PATEL

REPRESENTING NORTH Carolina’s 11th congressional district since 2023, Chuck Edwards is a former three-term state senator and has started numerous companies during his professional career. As a small-business owner with experience in government, Rep. Edwards has himself faced many of the challenges staring down the hospitality industry and wants to use his time in office to improve the lives of America’s workers.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THIS SESSION?

Small businesses are the backbone of America, and our risk takers and job creators have long been under attack from Washington. Like I did while serving in the North Carolina State Senate, I’ve been striving to reduce regulations, create a better tax climate, and help develop a workforce that provides opportunity and fuels our economy.

WHAT SORTS OF POLICIES, SUCH AS TAX AND REGULATORY REFORMS, DO YOU HOPE TO WORK ON TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?

The most pressing tax issue is to extend the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*, which is set to expire next year. This critical tax policy, among other things, allows a 20% deduction for small business entities and allows

accelerated depreciation. Regulation can best be kept in check with bills like the *REINS Act* and the *Ensuring Accountability in Agency Rulemaking Act*. Of course, there’s a constant stream of agency rules that need to be quashed.

WHAT EXCITES YOU THE MOST ABOUT SERVING IN CONGRESS?

What “excites” me most is the urgency required to get our country back on track. What I feel is most rewarding is finding myself in a position where I can use my life experience and business acumen to make a difference in the lives of the common people of America.

WHAT INDUSTRY (OR INDUSTRIES) DID YOU WORK IN BEFORE YOU WERE ELECTED TO CONGRESS?

I got my start in the hospitality and service industry, from behind the counter of McDonald’s when I was 16 years old. After climbing the ranks, I enjoyed a career working for our franchisor in middle management. I now own McDonald’s restaurants where I personally experience the difficulty of operating a business. I’ve also served on the board of directors for a community bank, and I’ve started two real estate investment companies and a self-storage company. All these experiences give me a perspective in Congress that’s clearly missing on Capitol Hill.

WHAT LED YOU TO RUN FOR CONGRESS?

After recognizing we need more people in government who truly understand the

challenges of running a small business and the concepts of business – service, financial responsibility, efficiencies, and accountability – I decided to offer my skill set to help make a difference.

WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT STAYING IN HOTELS?

I don’t have to make my own bed.

WHY ARE HOTELS AND HOTEL OWNERS IMPORTANT TO YOUR DISTRICT/STATE?

My district’s economy is driven primarily by tourism, and hotels are quintessential to the tourist industry.

THE HOTEL WORKFORCE WAS ONE OF THE INDUSTRIES MOST AFFECTED BY THE PANDEMIC. DO YOU SEE CONGRESS PLAYING A ROLE TO SUPPORT BUILDING BACK THE HOTEL WORKFORCE?

Yes. Congress must incentivize our citizens to work, not to avoid work. We need more work requirements, and solid unemployment reforms. For example, I’m the author of the *Unemployment Integrity Act* that would require unemployment claimants to show up for job interviews. ■

Neal A. Patel is Managing Partner of Patel Partners, a bipartisan, bicameral government affairs consulting firm located on Capitol Hill, and he can be reached at neal@patelpartnersdc.com.

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What I feel is most rewarding is finding myself in a position where I can use my life experience and business acumen to make a difference in the lives of the common people of America.”



by VIC RAGHA

IN THE BUSTLING WORLD OF HOSPITALITY, the battle for influence and legislative support often seems tilted in favor of franchised properties. These giants wield the considerable resources and backing of well-established brands, giving them a formidable edge in advocacy efforts. However, amidst this landscape dominated by big names and deep pockets, independent hotels find themselves facing unique challenges and opportunities. Advocacy becomes not just a choice but a necessity for these independent entities – crucial for safeguarding their interests and ensuring a level playing field in an industry where competition can be fierce.

Independent hotels, devoid of the corporate backing enjoyed by their franchised counterparts, often must navigate

legislative and regulatory landscapes alone. Unlike branded properties, which can rely on the collective lobbying power and resources of their parent companies, independents must carve their path through a complex maze of laws, regulations, and policies that can significantly impact their operations and bottom line. This stark contrast underscores the vital importance of advocacy for independent hotels.

KEEPING OPTIONS OPEN

One of the most compelling reasons for independent hotels to engage in advocacy is the preservation of their autonomy and flexibility. Unlike branded properties, which operate under the umbrella of a corporate entity, independents cherish their ability to make decisions that

reflect their unique identity and cater to the specific needs of their clientele. Advocacy allows them to safeguard this autonomy by advocating for policies that support entrepreneurship, foster innovation, and promote fair competition in the marketplace.

Moreover, independent hotels often have different needs from a legislative standpoint compared to their branded counterparts. While franchised properties may prioritize policies that bolster brand recognition and standardization across their portfolio, independents typically seek measures that level the playing field and mitigate the inherent disadvantages they face. For example, legislation that imposes stringent regulatory requirements or imposes prohibitive costs may disproportionately affect independent

For independent hoteliers,
advocacy can be a necessary lifeline

To the

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Unlike branded properties, which can rely on the collective lobbying power and resources of their parent companies, independents must carve their path through a complex maze of laws, regulations, and policies that can significantly impact their operations and bottom line.”

hotels, which lack the economies of scale enjoyed by larger brands.

Consider, for instance, regulations related to zoning and land use planning. While such regulations may pose minimal challenges to franchised properties backed by corporate resources, they can present significant barriers to entry or expansion for independent hotels. By advocating for more flexible zoning laws or streamlined permitting processes, independent hotels can create a more conducive environment for growth and development, thereby enhancing their competitiveness in the marketplace.

Similarly, taxation policies can have disparate impacts on independent hotels compared to branded properties. While large hotel chains may have the resources to navigate complex tax codes and exploit loopholes, independent hotels often lack

such luxury. Advocacy efforts aimed at achieving tax equity and fairness can help level the playing field, ensuring that independent hotels are not unduly burdened by tax policies that favor larger competitors.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Furthermore, issues such as online travel agency (OTA) commissions and distribution fees disproportionately affect independent hotels, which often lack the negotiating power and leverage enjoyed by branded properties. By advocating for

greater transparency and fairness in OTA contracts, independent hotels can mitigate the impact of exorbitant commissions and ensure a more equitable distribution of revenue.

In conclusion, advocacy is not just an option but a necessity for independent hotels seeking to thrive in a landscape dominated by franchised properties. By engaging in advocacy efforts, independents can protect their autonomy, address their unique legislative needs, and level the playing field in an industry where competition can be daunting. Through collective action and strategic advocacy, independent hotels can assert their presence, amplify their voices, and secure a brighter future for themselves and the broader hospitality sector. ■



Vic Ragma, an AAHOA Ambassador for the North Texas Region, grew up in the hospitality industry, but his career took a detour into the engineering field before he returned to the family business in 2006. Today, he's the Principal for the Ragma Group, a family-owned real estate development company in Amarillo, TX, that has partnerships with Choice Hotels International, G6 Hospitality, and more.



Breaking the language barrier

Six tips for better communication in multilingual hospitality teams

by RICK FARRELL

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION is crucial within hospitality if you're aiming to provide A-grade service and maintain a reputation for excellence.

In 2024, four languages have more than half a billion speakers (English, Mandarin, Hindi, and Spanish), while French and Arabic aren't far behind. Having multilingual reception and concierge staff can be a significant boon, making guests feel understood and welcome. However, hotels with multilingual teams can face challenges. Miscommunication often leads to a failure to deliver an appropriate level of service resulting in guest dissatisfaction and a reduction in efficiency.

Here we'll explore the strategies hoteliers sometimes employ to ensure smooth and effective communication among team members who speak different languages.

THE CHALLENGES OF MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION

Hotels are melting pots, with staff and guests speaking a range of tongues. That such diversity enriches the guest experience is undisputed. It also poses significant communication challenges, including:

- A lack of available vocabulary, particularly for highly specific terms (cleaning agents, types of glassware, food ingredients).
- Differences in cultural communication regarding admitting error, experiencing shame, or being honest in a way that may disadvantage another.
- A lack of ability to handle complaints, particularly when guests are agitated or speaking quickly.
- Inconsistencies in service provision; staff with a detailed comprehension of guest needs can deliver better service than those who haven't grasped the subtleties.
- A need for additional managerial support to maintain service continuity and consistency.

Addressing these challenges requires a strategic approach engaging both human and technological resources.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is the backbone of service excellence. Clear, precise instruction and comprehension ensures guest needs are met promptly and satisfactorily. Good communication fosters a positive work environment, bonds teams, and minimizes mistakes.

With multilingual teams, it's especially vital to establish communication protocols that all team members can understand and follow.

1 IMPLEMENT MULTILINGUAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

Comprehensive onboarding: Ensure all training materials and onboarding processes are available in multiple languages. This will help new hires understand their roles and responsibilities clearly from the start.

Continuous language training: Provide language training for staff to improve their proficiency in the primary languages used within the hotel. This can include in-person classes, online courses, or conversation groups.

2 LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSLATION TOOLS

Translation apps and devices: Equip staff with reliable translation apps and devices to facilitate real-time communication. Ensure that these tools are user-friendly and accessible to everyone.

Multilingual communication platforms: Adopt communication platforms that support multiple languages and automated translation features. Platforms like Slack or Microsoft Teams can be customized to accommodate various languages.

3 FOSTER A CULTURE OF INCLUSION AND RESPECT

Cultural sensitivity training: Conduct regular training sessions on cultural sensitivity and awareness. This helps staff appreciate diverse backgrounds and understand different communication styles.

Encourage open communication: Create an environment where staff feel comfortable expressing themselves, asking for clarification, and providing feedback. Doing so fosters mutual respect and understanding.

4 USE VISUAL AIDS AND SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Clear signage and labels: Use visual aids like pictograms, multilingual signage, and clear labels throughout the hotel. This helps bridge language gaps and ensures essential information is accessible to everyone.

Simplified communication: Encourage staff to use simple, plain language and avoid jargon or idioms that might be confusing. This is particularly important in written communications and instructions.

5 DESIGNATE LANGUAGE AMBASSADORS

Language liaisons: Assign staff members proficient in multiple languages as language ambassadors. These individuals can help with translations and bridge communication gaps between team members.

Peer support: Encourage a buddy system where experienced, multilingual employees support those who are less proficient in the dominant language, improving teamwork and collaboration.

REGULAR TEAM MEETINGS AND FEEDBACK SESSIONS

Multilingual meetings: Hold regular team meetings and ensure they're conducted in a way that accommodates more than one language. This might include providing written multilingual translations or summaries.

Feedback mechanisms: Adopt a feedback system where staff can voice concerns and make suggestions about communication issues. Regularly review and implement feedback to improve communication strategies.

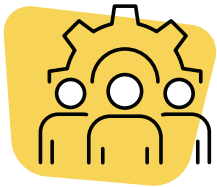
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HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY FOR ENHANCED COMMUNICATION

Fortunately, there are tools hospitality managers can adopt to help communicate in multilingual settings. These can significantly assist with producing multilingual instruction and improving communication in diverse teams. Such tools include:



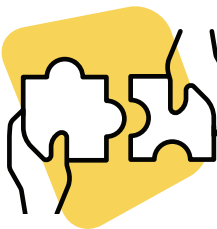
Translation apps and software: Translation apps and software can provide real-time translations, making it easier for staff to understand and respond to guests and colleagues.

Tools like Google Translate and iTranslate offer quick translations, although they might not always capture the nuances of hospitality-specific language.



Multilingual communication platforms: Platforms designed for multilingual communication can be highly effective. Tools like Jive and Unily are worth exploring when creating intranets that all staff will find engaging and helpful.

Such platforms support multiple languages and offer features like automated translation, enabling seamless communication between team members. They can be integrated into existing hotel management systems, facilitating easier coordination and information sharing.



Translation devices: Handheld translation devices such as those produced by Vasco or Timekettle can be particularly useful for on-the-go communication.

These devices can translate spoken language in real-time, making them ideal for front-line staff who interact directly with guests. They can help reduce misunderstandings and ensure that guests promptly receive the information they need.



Real-time interpretation: Services exist to provide real-time interpretation, using a combination of technology and human expertise to deliver excellent translations.

Such services have multilingual staff on call able to listen in to conversations remotely and deliver real-time interpretation directly into a customer’s earpiece.

A common example of this technology in use are the UN Assembly sessions in which simultaneous translation of speakers are provided for members whose first language isn’t being spoken. The UN has a specialist Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to provide this and other in-house translation services.

ANTICIPATING FUTURE TRENDS IN MULTILINGUAL TEAM COMMUNICATION

As technology improves, multilingual communication in hotels should become easier, with better means to achieve parity between staff of different cultures and languages.

AI is revolutionizing translation services, providing more accurate and context-aware translations. Voice recognition technology is also improving, making real-time translation more seamless and efficient. Additionally, virtual reality and augmented reality could offer immersive language training programs for hotel staff, further breaking down communication barriers.

Effective communication within multilingual hotel teams is essential for delivering outstanding guest experiences. By understanding the challenges and adopting the latest technological solutions, hotels can ensure their diverse teams communicate effectively and work harmoniously.

As technology evolves, the tools available for bridging language gaps will only become more sophisticated. Hopefully human empathy and understanding will keep pace with the empowered conversations such tools enable. ■



Rick Farrell is North America’s foremost expert in improving manufacturing group communication, education, training and group hospitality processes. He has more than 40 years of group hospitality experience, most recently serving as President of PlantTours for the last 18 years. He has provided consulting services with the majority of Fortune 500 industrial corporations improving group communication dynamics of all types in manufacturing environments.



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Harness your data

Using AI and
machine learning
to enhance the
guest experience

by ROBERT LEVINE

IN THE DYNAMIC WORLD OF HOS-

pitality, guest experience is the pinnacle of success. The integration of AI and machine learning (ML) has transformed guest services across major branded hotels and casinos. ComOps has handled more than 3 million minutes of contact center calls on behalf of hotels and casinos. In those calls, AI can be used behind the scenes to improve efficiency, create value for their clients, and improve the guest experience. By analyzing that wealth of data, it's possible to glean insights into the current state of contact centers and reservations – often the first point of contact for many guests – and the potential AI offers to improve hospitality guest experiences.

CURRENT STATE OF CALL MANAGEMENT

Despite the digital revolution, guests still prefer human interaction, especially in the customer-centric hospitality industry. Guests continue to appreciate the warmth and personalized attention from live agents. However, not all interactions are created equal; data shows variability in satisfaction based on the nature of the queries handled. This variability presents an opportunity for AI to assist, ensuring every guest interaction isn't just handled, but enhanced.

On the flip side, AI-powered call handling that was initially met with skepticism has evolved. Guests may start a call with a chatbot with hesitation but often hang up satisfied. Up to 50% of routine inquiries are now automated, allowing

human agents to focus on more complex, value-added interactions. With robust AI systems, satisfaction scores have reached as high as 82% in various deployments. One AI voice assistant was even nominated for employee of the month.

ENHANCING GUEST EXPERIENCES THROUGH AI

Beyond call centers, AI and ML have extensive applications across various hotel operations – from front office to housekeeping and revenue management. These technologies are instrumental in optimizing efficiency and personalizing services. For instance, predictive analytics can forecast staffing needs, enhance resource allocation, and even suggest personalized offers to guests based on their preferences and past behavior, thus not only meeting but anticipating guest needs.

Going back to call centers and reservations, AI has the potential to replace or augment the lower third of call center operations. This shift could dramatically reduce wait times – and, when coupled with increasing service capabilities in more languages, can significantly enhance guest satisfaction. Moreover, by leveraging AI to analyze sentiment and feedback in real-time, hotels can dynamically adjust their services to better meet guest expectations.

GETTING STARTED

For hoteliers interested in testing the waters with AI, it’s ideal to partner with a team that has direct experience. A good place to start with AI is by measuring sentiment of callers to help improve the quality

assurance and training programs. Other behind-the-scenes areas to get started are with call forecasting, staffing alignment, accent neutralization, background noise canceling, and providing real-time articles to agents while they are on phone calls. After tightening up behind the scenes, dipping your toe into guest-facing AI becomes more natural, perhaps by leveraging a well-trained chatbot using advanced interactive voice response (IVR) techniques.

The integration of AI and ML in hospitality isn’t just about automating tasks; it’s about elevating the entire guest experience. By harnessing these cutting-edge technologies, hotels can focus more on what truly matters – creating memorable, personalized guest experiences that resonate on a personal level. ■

“The integration of AI and ML in hospitality isn’t just about automating tasks; it’s about elevating the entire guest experience.”



After enhancing a global brand’s operations in 2017, Robert Levine founded ComOps in 2021 to offer similar efficiencies to smaller casinos and serves as its Chief Executive Officer. Specializing in contact center, revenue management, guest sentiment, and digital innovation for the hospitality and gaming sector, ComOps has seen rapid growth.

RENOVATION reconsidered

Spending more upfront to save in the long run

by GREG GLINIEWICZ

FOR ANY HOTEL OWNER OR developer, there's a critical decision to make when renovating or building a hotel: whether to spend money now to protect the longevity of the asset's value or save money to be prepared for potential downturns, like COVID-19. As the focus remains on both constructing new hotels and renovating existing ones, owners must carefully choose where to allocate their funds for hospitality design. One area that presents both a cost-saving and an investment opportunity is the interior finishes, specifically millwork and casegoods.

While investing in quality millwork and casegoods might seem too expensive upfront, it ultimately pays off by providing durability, enhancing the aesthetic appeal, and reducing the need for frequent replacements if sustainable materials are used.

QUALITY MILLWORK AND CASEGOODS

For owners planning to keep a property long term, investing in high-quality millwork and casegoods ensures they stand

the test of time. If the millwork doesn't last, more money will be spent over time to replace these products. This not only increases long-term costs but also disrupts operations and inconveniences hotel guests. Choosing high-quality millwork and casegoods from the beginning ensures a more durable and reliable investment, which translates to consistent performance, a better guest experience, and ultimately, significant savings over time.

Indirect costs should also be considered. If an owner chooses a lower quality millworker who fails to deliver on their promises, the hotelier will have to invest valuable time, which could be spent on other priorities, to find replacements. Without thorough screening, it's impossible to know the quality of materials used, whether the product was manufactured in a state-of-the-art facility, or the level of experience and knowledge of the millworker.

MILLWORK'S COMPLEXITY

Millwork also encompasses a series of meticulous and essential steps that ensure its longevity and quality, so it's important

to remember millwork is more than a simple cabinet or bar. From precise field dimensioning to accurate procurement of materials, every phase requires expertise and meticulous attention to detail. Proper custom cutting and professional installation are crucial to achieving the perfect fit and finish, preventing costly adjustments or replacements down the line. This approach not only enhances the aesthetic appeal but also guarantees durability, saving money in the long run.

The installation of custom millwork is an important step that can make or break a project. High-quality millwork deserves equally high-quality installation to ensure proper function and perfect fit. This is especially crucial in high-traffic areas like hotel lobbies, reception desks, and guest rooms, where precision and durability are paramount. A well-trained installer brings a level of precision and expertise that ensures every piece of millwork is correctly aligned and securely fitted. This reduces the risk of future issues such as warping, gaps, or misalignments, which can detract from the overall aesthetic and functionality of the space. Skilled installers understand the intricacies of the materials they



Ultimately, the idea is to invest in quality now and reap the rewards later. Choosing quality products, suppliers, and vendors may seem expensive at first, but spending that money upfront protects the overall cost.”

work with and can adapt to the unique challenges each project presents.

Using the right millwork elements in a hotel also can improve the customer experience. Well-constructed millwork offers an enhanced design and cohesive flow throughout the entire space and is sturdy enough to withstand daily wear and tear. Hotel owners who continue to create a stable customer experience over time will gain repeat customers and improve the overall guest experience.

Ultimately, the idea is to invest in quality now and reap the rewards later. Choosing quality products, suppliers, and vendors may seem expensive at first, but spending that money upfront protects the overall cost. Beyond providing great products and services, hotel owners should focus on creating a positive experience that makes a lasting impact on their guests. Investing mindfully in high-quality millwork and casegoods will pay dividends in the form of enhanced durability, guest satisfaction, and long-term savings. ■



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AAHOA MEMBERS IN ACTION



Washington DC Area Regional Director Deepak Patel and Ambassadors Swapnil Patel and Sundip Patel advocated for AAHOA and the industry with Virginia State Corporation Commission officials. They discussed hoteliers' insurance concerns and solutions with Virginia Insurance Commissioner Scott White, also a vice president of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, Deputy Insurance Commissioner Zuhairah Tillinghast, Chief Insurance Market Examiner, Property & Casualty Andrea Baytop, and Director of Government Affairs, Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association, Tommy Herbert.



Under the leadership of Regional Director Naresh (ND) Bhakta, members of the Greater Los Angeles Area Region provided testimony to the Los Angeles City Council regarding its police permitting process.



AAHOA Ambassador Dhrushil Patel, Northwest Regional Director Taran Patel, and other Ambassadors and members in the region put together the first AAHOA event in Klamath County, OR, in AAHOA's history. They held a Town Hall with 85 industry professionals attending.



The North Central Region Hotel Owners Conference in Indianapolis attracted more than 100 attendees and raised nearly \$10,000 for AAHOA PAC. The event had an impressive array of speakers including Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, Red Roof President Zack Gharib, Indiana Restaurant & Lodging Association President & CEO Patrick Tamm, Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association President & CEO Joe Savarise, and Chairman & CEO of Sun Development & Management Corporation Bharat Patel.

The Northeast Region Hotel Owners Conference & Trade Show welcomed some 200 attendees, gained 14 new members, and raised \$50,000 for PAC. Special guests included Rep. Carlos González (D-MA), Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno, Massachusetts Lodging Association President & CEO Chris Pappas, and Hampden County District Attorney Anthony Gullini. The event also garnered media coverage from a local television station.





The South Central Texas Hotel Owners Conference & Trade Show was a huge success, as it welcomed more than 160 attendees, gained 16 new Annual Members, and raised nearly \$7,000 for AAHOA PAC. The event started with a “Power Brunch: Her Path to Ownership” in San Antonio, bringing together almost 50 women hoteliers.



A recent Town Hall in the Greater Los Angeles Region drew a full house, engaging members in discussions on ADA requirements, insurance, and homelessness. The event, hosted in partnership with local International Global Charities, highlighted key community concerns.



AAHOA Members gathered in Hagerstown, MD, for a Town Hall meeting, led by Washington DC Area Regional Director Deepak Patel.



Arkansas Regional Director Danny (Chintu) Patel and Ambassadors held their first-ever Women’s Town Hall, which drew 240 women. Speakers discussed labor laws, the pending Department of Labor Overtime Rule, future asset planning, and business and personal tax planning.



A successful Town Hall was held in Charleston, SC, under the direction of South Carolina Regional Director Fenil Desai. These Town Halls are essential for members to build connections and tackle industry issues together.



Members of the Mid South Region took part in the Memphis Volleyball Club Tournament, where AAHOA had the opportunity to partner as a sponsor. It was a successful event with nearly 1,000 attendees and 70 teams, and AAHOA welcomed 22 new members.



With 150 attendees and eight new members joining the ranks, the South Carolina Region Hotel Owners Conference & Trade Show was a success. The event also raised \$26,100 for AAHOA PAC, exceeding the goal.

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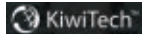
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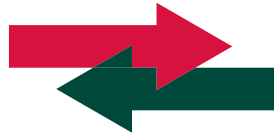


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