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AAHOA Members Gather in D.C. to Tackle Critical Hotel Industry Issues During Key Election Year

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 25, 2024 – With 468 seats in the U.S. Congress (33 Senate seats and all 435 House seats) and the U.S. presidency up for grabs this November, the stakes have never been higher for the hotel industry. This year's AAHOA (Asian American Hotel Owners Association) Fall National Advocacy Conference (FNAC) underscored hoteliers' critical role in shaping policies impacting their businesses and the broader hospitality sector.

On September 18 and 19, some 200 AAHOA Members and leaders came together in Washington, D.C., to spotlight the most urgent issues impacting hotel owners across the country. During nearly 200 meetings with Senate and House members and their staff, hoteliers had the chance to advocate for their key policy priorities, many of which were discussed face-to-face with U.S. senators and representatives.

"As hotel owners, we understand our businesses and the industry better than anyone," **AAHOA Chairman Miraj S. Patel** said. "It's crucial that the voices of AAHOA Members are heard and their realities are taken into account when policymakers are making decisions that affect their livelihoods and businesses."

Day 1 - Advocacy Education, Keynote Speaker, Congressional Reception

This year's event featured keynote speaker U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), who hails from the same state as AAHOA Chairman Patel.



"It was an honor to have Senator Cruz as the keynote speaker at this year's event," said **AAHOA Chairman Patel**. "As a fellow Texan, I'm proud to see strong leadership from our state. His insights on the challenges facing our industry and the broader economy are invaluable, and his commitment to advocating for small businesses like ours is something all AAHOA Members can appreciate."

Senator Cruz shared the story of his father, who fled Cuba, and how he started a small business in the oil and gas industry, likening his experience to many in the audience. He also discussed the 2024 presidential election and the need for job creation, border security, tax cuts, and a reduction in government regulations.

"My priority every day is fighting for you, fighting for your small businesses to grow and prosper," **Senator Cruz** said.

He also praised the extraordinary impact of AAHOA Members, who own nearly 90% of the hotels in Texas, and added, "I am proud of everyone in this room. You're driving jobs, you're driving security."

AAHOA also hosted a Congressional Reception for its members and legislators so they had the opportunity to further connect on issues. Those attending included:

- Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA)
- Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA)
- Rep. John Duarte (R-CA)
- Rep. Chuck Edwards (R-NC)
- Rep. Mike Ezell (R-MS)
- Rep. Bill Foster (D-IL)
- Rep. Russell Fry (R-SC)
- Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ)
- Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-WI)
- Rep. Michael Guest (R-MS)
- Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD)
- Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD)
- Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL)
- Rep. Ralph Norman (R-SC)
- Rep. Greg Stanton (D-AZ)
- Rep. Michelle Steel (R-CA)
- Rep. Marilyn Strickland (D-WA)
- Rep. Shri Thanedar (D-MI)
- Rep. Lori Trahan (D-MA)
- Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI)



Day 2 - Advocacy in Action

AAHOA's advocacy efforts support its members and their hotels while positively impacting the communities they serve. FNAC allows AAHOA Members to continue building relationships with members of Congress and discuss solutions to ongoing challenges faced by

hoteliers, many of whom are small business owners.

In talking to legislators, AAHOA Members focused on three key legislative priorities to ensure the sustainability of hotels and the broader American travel industry. AAHOA Members urged Congress to support the following issues:

- **Expanding access to capital** by supporting the *Loans In Our Neighborhoods (LIONS) Act of 2024* (H.R. 9176), which seeks to increase the maximum loan amount for Small Business Administration 7(a) loans from \$5 million to \$10 million.
- **Introducing more competition in credit card processing** via the *Credit Card Competition Act* (S. 1838/H.R. 3881). This legislation aims to introduce more competition in credit card processing, potentially saving businesses billions annually by reducing transaction fees.
- **Defending hotel owners from regulations that could impose significant financial burdens.** A prime example is the Department of Labor's new Overtime Rule, which has substantially raised the salary threshold for overtime exemptions. To address this, AAHOA is supporting the *Congressional Review Act* (S.J. Res. 97/H.J. Res. 166), which seeks to repeal the new rule.



"Engaging directly with lawmakers is how we turn passion into policy," said **AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake**. "Representing more than 60% of U.S. hotel owners, it is essential that AAHOA leaders collaborate with legislators to drive positive changes that will support the industry in these challenging times. By sharing their experiences and addressing key issues, AAHOA Members are building meaningful relationships with the nation's top policymakers. The long-term benefits will be substantial, allowing AAHOA to continue supporting the industry for generations to come."

Day 2 - PAC Reception

AAHOA hosted a special reception for those members who donated \$1,001 or more to its Political Action Committee (PAC). The AAHOA PAC gives AAHOA the opportunity to advocate on behalf of its members on Capitol Hill and in state capitals across the country.

"Our Political Action Committee is the cornerstone of AAHOA's advocacy efforts, giving us a powerful voice on Capitol Hill and in state capitals nationwide," **Patel** said. "I'm deeply grateful to our members who have generously contributed to our PAC. Their commitment ensures we can continue to fight for policies that protect and empower hotel owners across the country. Together, we are making a lasting impact on our industry and our communities."

For more information on AAHOA's policy priorities and issues advocated for at the 2024 AAHOA Fall National Advocacy Conference, [view the AAHOA 2024 FNAC Backgrounder](#). Photos of the event are available upon request to PR@AAHOA.com.

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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 1 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.