

Dear [c2#],

As you know, the hospitality sector has been among those parts of the economy hardest hit by the economic downturn. In this issue of the Restaurant Action Network newsletter, we focus on efforts to revive the travel industry to help increase restaurant business. We also provide updates on two of our current key issues: the LEAN Act and card check legislation. As you know, Congress is moving on these issues right now, and their outcome will have significant consequences for the restaurant business.

You'll also find the latest restaurant industry forecast, and a highlight of trends on display at our upcoming Hotel-Motel Show. We hope you enjoy these stories, and we invite you to provide feedback by clicking the links at the end of each article to tell us how helpful the information is to you. Thank you for your continued support; your active participation in our advocacy efforts makes a difference for everyone in our industry.

What's Happening in Restaurant Advocacy?

As you know, our government affairs team is tracking dozens of issues that affect the many different aspects of our business. Here's a look at the most pressing issues on our radar screen today:

Reviving Travel & Tourism is Key to Restaurant Industry

The travel and tourism industry is taking a significant hit from the economic downturn that is hurting restaurants, hotels, and many other businesses. With one in eight American workers employed by the travel and tourism industry---a number that exceeds employment in the health care, retail, or manufacturing sectors---isn't it time we take action to encourage the renewal of this critically important American industry? Fortunately, the U.S. Tourism Association is spearheading such action, and you can help generate positive momentum that will turn this ailing industry around.

The fact is, media and policymaker condemnation of spending by companies that have received taxpayer assistance has caused thousands of companies nationwide to cancel legitimate meetings and events. Local communities and travel industry employees are paying the price. Business travel alone is responsible for 2.4 million jobs, and as companies cut meetings and events, travel-related jobs decline and billions in tax revenue is lost. In fact, the Department of Labor reported that nearly 200,000

Dish of the Month

Hotel-Motel Show Previews Food and Drink Trends



Where can you glimpse the hottest food and drink trends that will captivate consumers and populate menus across the U.S.? The 2009 National Restaurant Association Hotel-Motel Show provides a unique preview of what's on the horizon and can help distinguish your restaurant from the competition.

On May 16-19 at Chicago's McCormick Place, Hotel-Motel Show attendees will take in everything from exhibit floor displays to interactive culinary demonstrations and education sessions led by top chefs, restaurateurs, forecasters, and trendsetters. A demonstration area called "the Culinary Scene" will showcase the winner of the 2009 NRA Show Hot Chef Grilling Challenge, as well as highlight butchers and

travel-related jobs were lost in 2008 and an additional 247,000 job cuts are projected for 2009.

The White House is encouraging business-related travel, and so can you. Here are a few ways you can help make a difference:

- **Send a Letter to Your Members of Congress and the Media.** You can help protect the 17 million travel-related jobs in America by writing a letter today. Let your elected officials and the media know anti-travel rhetoric is leading to the displacement of thousands of American workers. Encourage them to look beyond the politics, to support meetings, events, and performance incentive travel because it is good business and can help recover and grow the economy. [Click here](#) to send a letter to your members of Congress, [or here](#) to communicate this important message to the media. Visit www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com for more information.
- **Enter the “Faces of Travel” Contest.** How can we demonstrate the personal impact that declining travel has on hard-working Americans everywhere? If you’ve felt the negative impact of slowing travel on your job, your family, your livelihood, or your community, Meetings Mean Business invites you to tell the world how the nationwide downturn in legitimate travel is hurting you. Help save millions of jobs across the United States and be eligible to win a \$5,000 prize. [Click here](#) to find out more and submit your original video explaining why business travel is important to you.
- **Participate in U.S. Travel Rally Day.** On Tuesday, May 12, during National Travel and Tourism Week, U.S. Travel Rally Day offers an unprecedented nationwide opportunity to say, “travel matters,” on one day and under one banner. The U.S. Travel Association is asking convention and visitors’ bureau staff to partner with business leaders and personnel from restaurants, hotels, meeting facilities, transportation providers, attractions, and others to engage elected officials and the media. As a restaurant industry stakeholder, we urge you to participate in this important effort. For more information, [click here](#).

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Urge Co-sponsorship and Action on the LEAN Act

The National Restaurant Association applauds the reintroduction of the bipartisan Labeling Education and Nutrition Act (LEAN Act) in both the House and Senate. Now, this groundbreaking legislation, which will establish

chefs demonstrating top trends, such as “profitable proteins.” Several specialty pavilions will also feature some of the hottest food and drink trends, including the Organic & Natural Pavilion, International Cuisine Pavilion, and American Food Fair. The International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event will be held in conjunction with the show too.

The best part? Celebrating its 90th year, the annual NRA Hotel-Motel Show is designed to bring together a global marketplace that offers attendees ideas and products they can take home and apply to their own menus. In the current economy, fresh ideas are essential for restaurants to remain innovative and attractive to customers. For a full schedule of culinary events and attractions at the NRA Show 2009, as well as a list of more than 65 free education sessions held at the event, [visit our website](#).

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national, uniform guidelines for providing nutrition information in the nation's chain restaurants, needs additional co-sponsors. We urge you to lend your voice to this issue and emphasize the importance of this bill to Members of Congress who will be participating in local events, such as town hall meetings, over their spring recess. Let your elected officials know that creating standard nutrition guidelines across the nation's chain restaurants will enable American families to make healthy dietary choices.

It's time to get rid of the confusing and counter-productive patchwork of state and local regulations mandating menu labeling. The LEAN Act offers a sound approach that gives consumers consistent access to the same nutrition information, regardless of their location. Encourage your elected official to co-sponsor this important legislation, which represents a positive step forward for consumers and restaurants everywhere. For more information on this issue, or to take action, [visit our website](#).

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Stop Card Check Legislation to Protect Employees

The National Restaurant Association continues to oppose the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which despite the legislation's deceptive title would change U.S. labor law and restrict employees' rights. Fortunately, since EFCA was reintroduced in the House (H.R. 1409) and Senate (S. 560), support for the bill has declined. In fact, U.S. Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) both spoke out against the legislation recently, confirming their opposition to the bill.

We thank you for making it clear to lawmakers that EFCA would unfairly revoke workers' rights to the private ballot, and adopt a faulty process for union-organizing elections. Please continue to urge your elected officials to oppose this undemocratic bill. For more information, [click here](#).

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Restaurant Industry Outlook Remains Uncertain

In these challenging economic times, the National Restaurant Association's comprehensive index of restaurant activity provides a metric by which to track

the impact of the economy on the restaurant industry. Unfortunately, despite a small increase from January to February, the Association's Restaurant Performance Index (RPI) stood below 100 for the 16th consecutive month. The RPI, which is comprised of a "Current Situation Index" and an "Expectations Index" reflected negative same-store sales, poor customer traffic levels, slowing capital spending activity, and low expectations for sales growth in the months ahead. Hudson Riehle, NRA's senior vice president of Research and Information Services, summarized the findings this way: "Although the index registered its second consecutive monthly gain, each of the RPI's eight indicators stood below 100 in February, which signifies continued contraction." [Click here](#) to view the report, or for more detailed data and analysis, view our [Restaurant TrendMapper](#).

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