

CT Lodging Association Newsletter, March 2007

CLA Legislative Report – Simon Flynn, Executive Director

The Connecticut Lodging Association is engaged in a number of areas of interest to our membership. We're actively pursuing increased funding for tourism. We are doing much of the work outside of the public hearings by meeting with legislative leadership and key legislators to remind them of the value proposition there is in adequately funding tourism. CLA president Jillian Alps and I met with Senate President Pro Tem Don Williams and his chief of staff to discuss tourism funding. Although the senator was non-committal we do believe there is an improved atmosphere and understanding among many of the leadership and among the rank and file that travel and tourism is a good investment. Our next step which we are pursuing through our lobbying team is to set up a meeting with Bob Duff co-chair of the appropriations sub committee to move the funding forward.

The Lodging association is also in the midst of an ongoing discussion regarding what we believe is a double taxation on in-room movies. We are awaiting efforts by our lobbyists to set up a meeting with Revenue Services to discuss this issue. We are also trying to put together a rebate for those that were unjustly charged fines and made to turn in gift certificate money to the treasurer's office on unclaimed gift certificates. If you face any of these circumstances please call me at the CLA offices 860.635.5600 ext 101.

CLA is working on a few other concerns that face the full service hotels in their dining operations. We have had a number of meetings with legislative leadership: Senate President pro tem Williams, Majority leader Donovan, and Labor co-chair Senator Prague regarding a freeze on the cash wage paid to wait staff and bartenders. We were able to get a bill raised in this regard. It showed up with what we were told by the committee co-chair was a drafting error that did not articulate our position, however we were able to testify on the importance of the tip wage to the hospitality industry. It is critical in the event of an increase of the minimum wage.

Other legislation involves trans fats, which the marketplace is moving quickly on. We will ultimately be where we should be at, zero trans fats. However, we are concerned that there is a risk to industry members if the change is too rapid. Eighty percent of the oil produced for cooking comes from soy beans and although there is a newly engineered soybean, the transition to the "low Lin" soy bean is in the hands of the farmers as to what crop is most profitable, where they are in their planting cycle and what crop they will grow. As the large customers, such as Lay's, McDonalds, Marriott, Wendy's and others, make the change the impact on the marketplace is uncertain. When Lay's potato chips switched to sunflower oil they basically bought up that commodity. **The bottom line is**

that we are trying to slow the mandatory change, however my advice is to switch to zero trans fat oils and tell your customers that you have made the switch.

The Connecticut legislature's Labor Committee now wants to mandate employee pay periods (CBIA Legislative report).

(March 2, 2007) The Labor Committee is apparently trying to outdo itself in the number of anti-business measures it is proposing this legislative session.

So far, the committee has introduced more than 40 pieces of legislation that would drastically increase the cost of doing business in Connecticut, the cost of employee benefits and increase the administrative burdens of employers in dealing with labor and workplace issues.

One such measure, SB-1081, was the subject of a public hearing this week. It mandates that all private employers in the state pay their employees no less frequently than on a bi-weekly basis regardless of an employer's existing needs, resources or finances.

State law requires that all employers pay their employees at least on a weekly basis and no more than eight days after the end of the pay period. But the law also enables the state Labor commissioner to waive that requirement and allow any employer to establish regular paydays less frequently than weekly and no less than once a month.

According to the Wage and Hour Division of the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL), the DOL routinely grants waivers to companies throughout the state if they elect to pay their employees on any basis other than weekly, so long as employees are paid at least once per month.

.....

H2B Visas for Second Half of FY2007 Are Still Being Accepted

According to information posted on the US Citizenship and Immigration Services website (www.uscis.gov), petitions for temporary workers with starting dates after April 1, 2007 are still being accepted. As of February 27th, 32,512 petitions had been accepted and 10,689 are pending. The USCIS estimates that 51,000 petitions need to be received to reach the congressionally-mandated cap of 33,000 H-2B visas for the second half of the fiscal year. This assumes an allowance for withdrawals, denials and revocations.

More information about the H-2B work program is available on the USCIS website mentioned above or through the national Customer Service Center at (800) 375-5283.

.....

CLA Events

The Sexual Harassment Seminar, which was held on February 16th, was a success. It was presented by CLA's labor relations attorney Edward ("Bud") F. O'Donnell, Jr., Esq., this program gave attendees the opportunity to meet the mandatory training requirement and to keep your organization "harassment free," maintain a healthy, respectful, and productive work environment, and avoid time-consuming and costly lawsuits. CALL US if you missed this important seminar.

CLA GOLF AT GILLETTE RIDGE – June 12th. Don't miss this ever-popular CLA event. It is a great opportunity to get together with industry colleagues. It is a great chance for us to show our appreciation of the Allied vendors who help this event by being there and sponsoring it.

CLA CHARITY WINE TASTING – The CLA events committee is planning this great community service fundraiser for September of this year. And, as is always the case, we would love to have your participation. Please add your restaurant to the food tasting by making a simple call to Melissa at the CLA office. The location and date is still tentative but we are looking at the date of September 27th. We are awaiting confirmation by our event partner the Multiple Sclerosis Society for whether the details work for them.