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Restaurant Association of Maryland Participates in State Government Affairs Conference

Restaurant Associations from Around the Country Convene in Mississippi to Confer on Public Policy Issues Vital to the Industry in the Upcoming Legislative Sessions

Columbia, MD—Staff of the Restaurant Association of Maryland (RAM) arrived in Biloxi, Mississippi this week to attend the Council of State Restaurant Association's Annual State Government Affairs Conference. The conference brings together representatives of the restaurant industry to discuss public policy issues experts anticipate restaurants and related industries will face in the coming state legislative sessions that will begin in January 2009.

"The Restaurant Association of Maryland's participation in this program is very helpful in preparing our advocacy resources to protect our members against onerous regulation and legislation that may be introduced in the upcoming legislative session," said Melvin Thompson, senior vice president of Government Affairs and Public Policy for RAM. "The legislative trends and predictions shared among peers at this conference will make the industry stronger as we enter the new legislative sessions around the country."

RAM will kick off the 426th session of the Maryland General Assembly with its Annual Taste of Maryland Legislative Reception at the Lowes Annapolis Hotel on Monday, January 19, 2009.

"Like many other states, Maryland is facing significant budget shortfalls this year and recent increases in personal and corporate income taxes as well as sales tax have not generated the necessary revenue to fully fund the state budget. Although a slots referendum was recently approved by voters, its predicted revenue will not be available until at least 2011. Until then, the business community fears that additional tax increases will be aimed directly at them," added Thompson.

This session RAM anticipates renewed efforts by the legislature to increase unemployment insurance benefits and/or expand benefits to include part-time workers; legislation that mandates expensive recycling programs at restaurants and bars; increases to alcohol taxes and other industry-specific taxes; and mandatory menu labeling requirements that have successfully passed in other states and municipalities.

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The Restaurant Association of Maryland (RAM) has remained relevant to restaurateurs over 80 years by maintaining core principles born out of the first national financial crisis. The Restaurant Association of Maryland is a 3,000 plus member strong statewide trade association operated for the purpose of promoting, protecting and improving the foodservice industry in the state of Maryland. In 1927 a small group of Baltimore area restaurateurs met to deal with some of the challenges facing the economy and the Foodservice Industry. They believed that, once united, they could accomplish more for the industry and their respective businesses than if each wrestled the problems alone. Over the ensuing years RAM has done all this and much more. Since the very beginning, the Association has been run by a 30-40-member board of restaurateurs and suppliers working not only for the benefit of dues paying members, but also for the restaurant industry as a whole.

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