Aloha, HLTA Members:

We’re all in this together.

When I adopted that theme a few years ago, I had several goals in mind: to reaffirm the commitment of our Hawai‘i Lodging & Tourism Association members to our missions of advocacy, education, and philanthropy … to reinforce the notion that the visitor industry is the heart of the local economy and touches so many lives … and to convey the message that as tourism goes, so goes Hawai‘i.

Our 192nd General Membership Meeting finds us in an enviable position. Never before have the industry’s constituencies collaborated so closely or so effectively as we are now, all working together to strengthen tourism and serve our community.

In particular, we’re enjoying a very productive partnership with the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, under the leadership of industry veteran and President and CEO Chris Tatum, in which we’ve developed community benefits programs by sports organizations receiving tourism tax funding, directed matching funds to homeless service providers, awarded scholarships for future generations of local industry leaders, and more. In the process, we’ve also coordinated closely with the Hawai‘i Visitors and Convention Bureau.

We’re collaborating with the Honolulu Police Department, Armed Forces, Prosecutor’s Office, Hawai‘i Hotel & Visitor Industry Security Association, Waikiki Improvement Association, Waikiki Business Improvement District, Waikiki Neighborhood Board, Visitor Aloha Society of Hawai‘i, Retail Merchants Association, and other stakeholders to ensure the safety of visitors and residents in tourism districts. We’ve organized forums for public office-seekers to share their perspectives on our number-one industry.

This year, the HLTA, Hawai‘i’s Restaurant Association, and Star Events jointly introduced the Hawai‘i Hotel & Restaurant Show to showcase goods and services geared for the hospitality sector and for the second year in a row we co-sponsored with aio Media another tourism awards event to recognize the “best of the best” in our industry.

Finally, in our largest endeavor of the year, HLTA members worked with local charities—nearly 350 across the state—and thousands of volunteers, to raise a record $2.66 million through our signature Visitor Industry Charity Walk.

We are, indeed, all in this together. But there’s more work to be done.

We must grow our HLTA membership. We count nearly 700 strong among us, but there are so many other tourism-centric enterprises and individuals who should be in our ranks: suppliers of goods and services, airline and ground transportation companies, travel agencies, visitor attractions, building contractors, retailers, and other businesses, entities, and individuals involved in, and dependent on, tourism. Increasing our membership will be a major priority in the coming months.

We will expand our public education and outreach. There are growing concerns, among elected officials and the general public, about the impact and sustainability of tourism. As industry representatives, it behooves us to address these issues by informing the community of the importance of tourism and the innumerable contributions the industry makes to the betterment of our society.

We must exercise leadership and involvement in public policy decision-making. It’s not enough to sign a petition or submit testimony for a public hearing. For several years, with the backing of the HLTA Board of Directors, I’ve been encouraging our members to assume a more visible role in government and politics. We’ve endorsed candidates, held meet-the-candidate forums and mixers, sponsored Tourism Day at the State Capitol, actively lobbied for and against legislation, and aggressively advocated on behalf of the hospitality industry.

But we need to do much more. If we are to effectively represent our membership in shaping public policy, we must increase our political action coffers through donations, endorse and back candidates, and take the lead in public communication and outreach. If there is any major goal, any immediate need for HLTA, it is for the greater involvement of our members in government affairs so we can have a say in the direction of our industry and our state.

We will face new challenges in the coming months, to be sure. Many issues are emerging—managing tourism, global and domestic economic uncertainty, and more raids on the industry for tax revenue, among them. But I’m confident we will meet these challenges head-on, with commitment, strength, and the confidence that we are all in this together.

Mufi Hannemann
President & CEO
As a Westin Resort and Spa, we are proud to support the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, one of the state's leading industry organizations. The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association is a non-profit, statewide trade organization representing nearly 700 members, 170 of which are lodging properties with over 50,000 rooms. It was founded in 1947 and is the state's largest private sector tourism organization. Today, HLTA consists of nearly 700 members representing the state's leading industry. 170 of which are lodging properties with over 50,000 rooms.

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About the HLTA
The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association is a non-profit, statewide trade organization representing nearly 700 members, including lodging properties, lodging companies, and management companies, suppliers, and related firms and individuals. It was founded in 1947 and is the state's largest private sector tourism organization. Today, HLTA consists of nearly 700 members representing the state's leading industry. 170 of which are lodging properties with over 50,000 rooms.
Managing Tourism. With arrivals poised to set another record, there have been outcomes over the impact of tourism, complaints the industry doesn’t do enough for the community, that real estate is not committed to Hawai‘i’s long-term future. It’s undeniable that tourism is vital for jobs, for billions of dollars in spending and tax revenue, for investment and construction. It’s also undeniable that tourism is a victim of its own success.

We must manage tourism better, seeking quality over quantity. The hospitality industry must be proactive in demonstrating how it has been good for Hawai‘i and insisting on having a prominent role in any decision-making on tourism’s future. We are encouraging government to establish and revise tourism strategic plans to remedy problems and support sustainability.

Despite many well-intentioned efforts to diversify our economy, it remains that tourism is our core competence. It’s what we do well and do best. Rather than diversifying beyond tourism, we need to diversify within it. We must take what we’ve been doing and what local people and visitors alike appreciate about us: our culture, lifestyle, natural beauty, pristine environment. Not only is Hawai‘i a vacation destination, it’s a wonderful place to do business and invest in, and a place that prides itself on tourism. We are encouraging government to establish and revise tourism strategic plans to remedy problems and support sustainability.

Property Tax Hike. The hotel industry did not fare as well when the City administration pushed through a property tax hike for hotels and resorts, the only business category to be singled out for an increase. Hoteliers were very vocal in opposing the proposal and convinced four of the nine City Councilmembers to vote against the measure. It ultimately passed by a one-vote margin, reaffirming the need for the HLTA to take a much stronger role in supporting candidates who understand business.

Partnerships. Cooperation with other business and trade organizations has created strength in numbers for the HLTA. We collaborated with other groups on the Visitor Public Safety Conference, the candidate forums, and many of our philanthropic activities.

One in particular—the new leadership at the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority—has brought an important change to the industry, specifically in the enhanced public-private partnerships between the HTA and HLTA. HTA funded the LEAGUE’S LOTTE Champions in July, the National Football League’s preseason contest between the Los Angeles Rams and Dallas Cowboys, the AVP Volleyball Tournament, and the tournament games featuring the National Basketball Association’s Los Angeles Clippers and Houston Rockets. The HLTA assisted in leveraging those tourism-funded sponsorships into community benefit programs in 43 grants to local public high schools, numerous clinics for young people, and other opportunities for the teams and professional athletes to interact with the local community.

Leadership & Advocacy

Tourism Day. HLTA held its fourth annual Tourism Day at the State Capitol in February, with legislators and members exchanging insights on their respective issues and priorities. The event included a meet-and-greet breakfast and dozens of exhibits by member companies and organizations.

Tourism Tuesday and Tourism 101. To keep our public outreach and communication objectives, HLTA continued its weekly radio show on KHNR AM 690 and 94.3 FM, with guests from various hotel properties or tourism businesses to discuss the industry. The half-hour broadcast is available on the ThinkTech website and YouTube.

Visitor Public Safety Conference 2019. The first conference in 2018 brought together the hospitality industry, law enforcement, prosecutors, the military, nonprofit agencies, and other stakeholders to identify problems and recommend solutions to ensure the safety of visitors and residents in tourism districts. The 2019 conference was a follow-up on the recommendations crafted last year, with much progress reported on the steps taken to curb criminal activity, homelessness, and problems in Waikiki and other areas.

Hawai‘i Hotel & Restaurant Show. The HLTA, Hawai‘i’s Restaurant Association, and Star Events unveiled the new Hawai‘i Hotel & Restaurant Show on May 29–30 at the Hawai‘i Convention Center. The show hosted an impressive lineup of 300 vendors exhibiting a wide variety of goods and services vital to the success of our industry members, including legal, tax, and community benefit programs. The event featured professional development seminars and workshops, as well as the opportunity for members to network and attend the Visit Hawaii Island Conference. The next year’s show will be held April 15–16 at the Convention Center.

Transient Vacation Rentals. After several years of unsuccessful attempts to secure TVR legislation at the Legislature, we redirected our efforts to the county councils. With the Honolulu City Council’s passage this summer of a comprehensive ordinance regulating these illegal, tax-avoiding, community-damaging operations, all counties now have some form of prohibition on these activities. HLTA members were front-and-center in testifying before the councils and Legislature to seek fairness and openness between the traditional accommodations and the short-term online rentals, and their hard work was rewarded with these decisions.

If we do that, then we can use tourism as an opportunity to strengthen our appeal and advantages in health, education, sports and recreation, arts and culture, and agriculture and the culinary arts, which will help us in our appeal and advantages in tourism. We are encouraging government to establish and revise tourism strategic plans to remedy problems and support sustainability.

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TOP LEFT: Tourism Day, 2019. Many HLTA members and community leaders joined the annual conference. TOP RIGHT: All-in-one HTA collaboration directed $1 million in matching funds to providers of service to the homeless across the state. MIDDLE LEFT: Tourism Day, 2019. The event included a meet-and-greet breakfast and dozens of exhibits by member companies and organizations. BOTTOM LEFT: The new Hawai‘i Hotel and Restaurant Show on May 29–30 at the Hawai‘i Convention Center. TOP RIGHT: The half-hour broadcast is available on the ThinkTech website and YouTube.
Building Our Future

Philanthropy is one of the pillars of the Hawai‘i Lodging & Tourism Association, the industry’s way of reciprocating the community’s support and developing the next generation of island leaders. The association’s charitable endeavors include direct financial support exclusively for local charities through the Charitable Giving Fund, as well as scholarships for college and high school students.

Charity Walk Hits New Record, $2.66 Million. The 41st annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk set new records for donations, participants and attendance in 2019. The event surpasses a previous year’s total by raising $2.66 million in 2019. Thousands of walkers across the state participated in the statewide event in May, with the money raised on an island staying on that island to benefit local charitable programs. This year, about 390 nonprofit groups on Hawai‘i Island, Maui, Kaua‘i, Moloka‘i, and O‘ahu received the proceeds from the event.

Homelessness. While the hospitality industry has dug deep into its pockets to donate over $2.5 million in recent years to homelessness services, last year we backed a legislative proposal that allocated up to $1 million in state revenue, to be matched by private money, for these services in tourism-impacted areas. The HLTA, in partnership with the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, matched that appropriation in a single fiscal year, resulting in an aggregate $2 million for agencies statewide that serve the homeless.

Volunteerism. Hospitality industry volunteers across the state regularly participate in a variety of community service projects, including the Charity Walk, Aho‘o United Way fundraising campaign, Salvation Army bell-striking, back-to-school supply drives, mentoring, and innumerable other opportunities to help those in need.

Ho‘ōilina Scholarships. The HLTA and Hawai‘i Tourism Authority this year joined to create the Ho‘ōilina Scholarships for local public high school graduates pursuing degrees in the tourism, hospitality, or culinary fields. The scholarships (Ho‘ōilina is “legacy” in Hawaiian) are a new component of the HTA’s community outreach and an addition to the HLTA’s many high school scholarships (ho‘oolina is “legacy” in Hawaiian) are a new component of the HTA’s community outreach and an addition to the HLTA’s many high school scholarships (ho‘oolina is “legacy” in Hawaiian). The two-year, four-year scholarships of $3,000 per year are awarded to local high school seniors for the inaugural year, nine recipients are attending the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo, and one is matriculating at Hawai‘i Pacific University.

Citizen-Scholars. In April, HLTA members again awarded $12,000 to honor one senior from each public high school in the state for academic achievement and service to others. Each senior was awarded $1,000 and the top student at 19 schools earned an additional $2,500 for his or her post-graduate studies.

HLTA Member Scholarships. HLTA awarded $2,500 to the college-bound offspring of an HLTA hotel member and a second scholarship in the same amount for the son or daughter of an Allied member.

College Scholarships. HLTA awards scholarships annually to college students majoring in hotel/lodging or tourism industry management studies, either at the University of Hawai‘i or another accredited institution of higher learning. They include the Don Ho Legacy Scholarship for a student of Hawaiian ancestry studying music and the arts, a joint award with the Kamehameha Schools‘ Pāuali Foundation; two HLTA Hospitality and Tourism Scholarships for Kapālama Community College students; the Edwin K. Hartnett and R.W. Bob Holden Memorial scholarships for hotel/lodging management majors; the Clem Judd, Jr., Memorial Scholarship for students of Hawaiian ancestry studying tourism management; and the Hawai‘i Lodging & Tourism Pono‘aha Hōkūle‘a Scholarship, another partnership with the Pāuali Foundation for a student of Hawaiian ancestry majoring in travel industry management. Two HLTA standing committees also award scholarships: the Hawai‘i Women in Lodging & Tourism Scholarship for a college student enrolled in tourism studies and the Engineer’s Advisory Council Scholarship for a council member for professional development.

High School Awards. The association awarded the Ho‘ōilina Scholarships of $1,000 each to high school students enrolled in culinary programs to encourage their continued studies in the field.

Generational Mentoring. HLTA’s fourth class of Generational Mentoring recipients completed their work at the conclusion of the spring college semester, while the fifth class was introduced in September. Students from the University of Hawai‘i, Hawai‘i Pacific University, and Brigham Young University Hawaii are mentoring under the tutelage of general managers or top executives at 15 resorts or tourism enterprises.

Scholarship Golf Tournament. Generous members were quick to sign up for the annual HLTA Scholarship Golf Tournament in August. All the slots were filled, and the golfers’ generous donations and prizes from sponsors raised a record $105,000 for HLTA’s educational awards.

Rewarding Excellence

The men and women of the hospitality industry labor without fanfare or applause, instead taking their bows in the satisfaction of providing a memorable experience for our millions of visitors. Each year, the HLTA makes a special effort to recognize and honor these exceptional employees, who represent the people of Hawai‘i through dedication to their professions and their aloha.

Na Po‘e Pa‘ahana Awards. The 29th annual Na Po‘e Pa‘ahana Awards saluted individuals in eight career categories for their standout performances. The employees were nominated by their hotels for their work and civic leadership. The HLTA also honored individuals and businesses for their service and contributions to the industry.

Aloha Media Hawai‘i Lodging & Tourism Awards. The second annual Hawai‘i Media Hawai‘i Lodging & Tourism Awards feted the best-of-the-best among restaurants, hotels, attractions, events, and industry leadership. Dean Chuck Gee, dean emeritus of the University of Hawai‘i’s School of Travel Industry Management, received the first-ever Tourism Legacy Award for his many contributions to the industry, shortly before his passing. The event was held on the Hilton Hawaiian Village’s Great Lawn.