



April 27, 2011

Dear Florida House Member:

On behalf of the Independent Lodging Industry Association and its independent hotelier members (930 in Florida alone), I respectfully urge you to **Vote for HB 493, which would prevent a new tax on occupancy services from being applied to online travel agencies.**

Independent hotel owners rely on online travel agencies to help sell hotel rooms that would otherwise go unsold. Because they lack the marketing infrastructure of large hotel chains, independent hotel companies often find it helpful to partner with online travel companies-particularly during slower travel seasons. In this way, owners of independent hotels can reach out-of-state visitors to Florida who might never hear of these properties but for the marketing reach of their online partners.

This, in turn, means that **proposals to raise taxes on online travel companies threaten to cause disproportionate harm on the small business owners who operate independent hotels.** By making Florida more expensive to visit than the 48 other states that have not imposed such a tax, these proposals would act as a drag on economic recovery at the very time that Florida's economy is relying on tourism to help the state emerge from the recession.

In 2010, online travel companies like Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline and Travelocity helped hoteliers book more than 6.7 million room nights in FLORIDA.

That's more than 6.7 million nights of tourists in FLORIDA that could have gone somewhere else.

Online travel companies are partners with independent hotels in FLORIDA's tourism industry.

We need to ensure that FLORIDA doesn't tax travel agent services. We need to ensure those tourists keep putting their heads in independent hotel beds.

For the sake of Florida tourism and the small business owners who operate independent hotels in the state, I urge you to vote for this common-sense legislation to prevent discriminatory, burdensome taxes from being applied on online travel companies. **Please vote for HB 493.**

Respectfully yours,

Bobbie Singh-Allen

Bobbie Singh-Allen
Executive Director

About Us:

The Independent Lodging Industry Association (ILIA) is a national association founded in 2010 by the California Lodging Industry Association (CLIA). CLIA was established 65 years ago by a group of independent hotel owners and operators. Over the past several decades, independent hotels, independently owned franchised hotels, and owners have been impacted by decisions being made out of the halls of State Capitols to Washington, D.C. Chain hotels have dominated the policy making process. ILIA will level the playing field and allow independent hotels a seat at the table. For more information, please contact me at bobbie@independentlodging.org or 916-826-2075.