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Contact: [Matt Rhodes](#), (202) 289-3132

## **AH&LA STATEMENT ON RELEASE OF HOUSE REPUBLICAN DRAFT IMMIGRATION PRINCIPLES**

Washington, D.C. – January 30, 2014 - The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), the sole national association representing all segments of the 1.8 million-employee lodging industry, issued the following statement on the draft immigration reform principles offered today by House Republican leadership:

“This country’s existing immigration system is broken and cannot adequately meet the demands of our 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, and the time for action is now,” said Katherine Lugar, AH&LA president/CEO. “The draft principles issued today by House Republican leaders are an important development in addressing what the lodging industry recognizes will be a multi-step process in fixing these problems. We are encouraged by the signs of action in the House of Representatives and look forward to working collaboratively with members from both sides of the aisle in passing much-needed reform. There is a long way to go on hammering out details, but this draft is a crucial step in the process.”

Immigration reform is one of AH&LA’s top priorities for 2014 as outlined in the association’s recently-issued “Pro-Growth Policy Agenda for 2014.” In particular, the lodging industry is seeking reforms that:

- Establish a process to identify, screen, fine, and place in probationary status those undocumented workers currently in the U.S.;
- Ensure that any new employment verification system is effective, efficient, and fair;
- Strengthen the H-2B temporary worker program;
- Create a new lesser-skilled temporary worker program that allows non-agricultural employers to obtain workers when American workers are unavailable; and
- Include the provisions of the Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act to streamline visa processing and expand the number of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program.

The U.S. lodging industry is a strong driver of jobs and economic growth, currently employing 1.8 million hotel property workers and paying \$200.9 billion in travel-related wages and salaries. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects lodging will create more than 141,000 new jobs by 2020, and hoteliers are concerned over continuing difficulties in finding enough U.S. workers to fill these jobs. It is anticipated the problem will become more acute as the economy recovers, despite the good wages and growth opportunity afforded by the industry.

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*Serving the hospitality industry for more than a century, the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) is the sole national association representing all segments of the 1.8 million-employee U.S. lodging industry, including hotel owners, REITs, chains, franchisees, management companies, independent properties, state hotel associations, and industry suppliers. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., AH&LA provides focused advocacy, communications support, and educational resources for an industry generating \$155.5 billion in annual sales from 4.9 million guestrooms.*