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NEW ORLEANS HOTELS ADOPT TOURISM SUPPORT ASSESSMENT

New Orleans poised for the smart, sustainable growth of tourism, more international visitors and direct flights, and enhanced French Quarter public safety, quality of life enforcement, and infrastructure thanks to a 1.75% assessment being added to hotel guest folios

(NEW ORLEANS) - Feb. 27, 2014 - Following years of diligent work and unprecedented partnerships, the New Orleans tourism and hospitality industry announced today that the city's hotels have overwhelmingly voted through independent referendum to adopt the Tourism Support Assessment. An extremely high percentage of hotels are expected to establish an assessment to the consumer of 1.75 percent of the daily room charge, effective April 1, 2014, to fund the vital sales, marketing, promotion, incentives, visitor management and special event activities that keep New Orleans' cultural economy vibrant and put the city on a more level playing field with its competitor cities. The assessment also provides for the first dedicated funding stream in our city's history for enhancing public safety, quality of life enforcement, and infrastructure repair in the French Quarter. Assessment dollars will also go to driving new international visitation and assist in securing new international and domestic airlift for the city. The funding will also be utilized to expand awareness of New Orleans' cultural attractions and other compelling neighborhoods to visit throughout the city.

The referendum on the assessment was conducted by the Greater New Orleans Hotel and Lodging Association (GNOHLA), utilizing an independent CPA firm, and the balloting ended February 21. Each hotel had a number of votes equal to the number of rooms in their property. The assessment was made possible by Senate Bill 242 by Sen. Edwin Murray, which passed in the 2013 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature. The assessment mechanism was chosen in lieu of a straight tax increase to enhance industry accountability on performance and visitor management and to enable a specific dedication of funding for French Quarter improvements. Pursuant to Act 410, the assessment ratifying vote required a greater than two-thirds majority of the downtown hotel inventory voting in favor of the assessment in order to put the measure into effect. The vote was 95 percent

in favor of the assessment.

The New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation (NOTMC) work together to sell and promote the city as a leisure, convention, meetings, sports, cultural and special events destination. The dollars that visitors bring with them directly support approximately 78,000 jobs, fund significant basic city services such as police, EMT and street repairs, and flow through the New Orleans community to reach virtually every citizen in every neighborhood.

For years, the CVB and NOTMC have been facing serious funding shortfalls for sales, marketing, advertising and promotion activities. The assessment provides a much needed mechanism to fund tourism sales and management activities and enhancements critical to both residents and visitors in the French Quarter.

"We are thrilled to see our industry voluntarily unite to support such an important investment in our city's future, and we would like to thank David Bilbe, Mavis Early and the leadership of the Greater New Orleans Hotel Lodging Association, elected officials, industry leaders, and hoteliers who made it all possible," said Robert Bray, Chairman of the Board of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau and Area General Manager of Marriott International. "Our industry is committed to smart growth and is dedicated to making New Orleans one of the top destinations in the world for meetings, events and leisure as we approach our Tricentennial in 2018. With this new funding source, our residents will benefit from a stronger economy, more attractions and a better quality of life ... and our cultural economy will be strengthened, benefitting every local and all visitors."

"We could not be more pleased that our hotels banded together to adopt this assessment and create a critical funding mechanism to attract new meetings and convention business, international visitors, and generally grow our industry," said Darryl Berger, Chairman of the Board of New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation and President of The Berger Company. "I want to thank the hotels for this visionary and unselfish gesture - to assess themselves for the good of the city. With these funds we will continue marketing New Orleans to visitors around the world and maintain our ranking as a premier travel destination. As a dedicated advocate of French Quarter preservation, I am especially excited that we will have new resources with which to maintain and make our French Quarter safer than ever. And I look forward to a new era of partnership with our residents and city to ensure the future of this most remarkable of American neighborhoods. "

The assessment was presented originally as optional to the hotels pending the referendum vote, and now, following the next month's implementation and

execution process at the property level, it becomes mandatory to the consumer effective April 1. Although the assessment is not a formal state or local sales tax, it has, pursuant to the Act, the same legal status, mandatory element to the consumer as, and will be collected in the same manner as a hotel tax. All hotels in Orleans Parish that are continuing members of the CVB (excluding New Orleans East) will collect and pay the assessment. Net proceeds of the assessment will be disbursed to the CVB, NOTMC and the City monthly as follows: (1) .75 percent of the 1.75 percent assessment to the CVB for support for tourism and convention sales and marketing, incentives, visitor management, international marketing and airlift attraction, (2) .75 percent of the 1.75 percent assessment to the NOTMC for domestic tourism marketing and promotion and (3) .25 percent of the 1.75 percent assessment to the City for the French Quarter.

"New Orleans has so much to offer to visitors, but we can't rest on our laurels and expect them to keep coming, because competition from other cities is so fierce" said David Bilbe, President of Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association (GNOHLA) and General Manager of the Loews New Orleans Hotel. "Tourism is fought for and earned through sales and marketing each day. It doesn't just happen. And the visitor experience is critical to their returning. The hotels in our association know that this small investment to market our city - through the talented professionals at the CVB and NOTMC - means more revenue, higher demand and stronger occupancy at the end of the day. And more revenues to protect our French Quarter and run our city."

About the New Orleans Convention and Visitors BureauThe New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau is a nationally accredited, 1,100-member destination marketing organization and the largest and most successful private economic development corporation in Louisiana. The CVB and its members influence thousands of decision-makers and millions of visitors to choose New Orleans through direct sales, marketing, public relations, branding and visitor services at our New Orleans headquarters and offices in Washington, D.C., Chicago and four foreign countries. Consistently recognized as one of the top five CVBs in the country, the New Orleans CVB celebrates its 54th anniversary in 2014. For more information, please visit <http://www.neworleanscvb.com/>; www.facebook.com/neworleanscvb; or www.twitter.com/neworleans.

About New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation (NOTMC)NOTMC promotes the city as a leisure tourism destination throughout the year. Annually, NOTMC's marketing campaigns include strategic print, broadcast, and Internet advertising and public relations. Websites: NewOrleansOnline.com; NewOrleansMuseums.com; GoNOLA.com; RadioFreeNewOrleans.com. Social Media: Facebook.com/NewOrleansOnline; Twitter.com/visitneworleans; YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/gonolatv>.