

# IAAPA PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

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## **Zachary Stokes Joins IAAPA's Public Affairs Team**

Please join me in welcoming Zachary Stokes as the new Public Affairs Manager for IAAPA North America. In this new role, he is responsible for supporting IAAPA's public affairs program of work in the United States and Canada, with emphasis on U.S. state level engagement and grassroots mobilization.

Zach brings extensive experience in legislative management, policy analysis, and coalition building to the position. For the past 10 years, he worked on Capitol Hill supporting Representative Kurt Schrader (OR-05) where he focused on policy issues ranging from science, technology, and immigration to defense and education. Prior to that, he worked for Walt Disney World Parks and Resorts.

Zach earned his undergraduate degree at Florida Atlantic University and his graduate degree at Johns Hopkins University. You can reach him at [ZStokes@IAAPA.org](mailto:ZStokes@IAAPA.org).

## **Key Travel Related Priorities Included in Omnibus Bill**

President Biden recently signed into law a \$1.5 trillion omnibus bill that contains many key travel-related priorities including restoring Brand USA and a plan to alleviate the ongoing visa processing issues, including backlogs. The new law requires the Department of State to create an action plan addressing excessive visa application wait times and restoring consular staffing to ensure the adequate fulfillment of services.

Additionally, the new law provides some relief from the H-2B cap, which will allow for additional temporary work visas. Working in partnership with our state, regional, and national travel and tourism association partners, IAAPA remains focused on solutions that will assist the economic recovery of our industry.

## **White House Requests Additional COVID Response Resources**

In a letter sent to Congressional leadership last week, the White House requested additional COVID response resources including funding for additional booster vaccine doses, additional monoclonal antibody treatments, investments in next-generation vaccines and treatments, and the maintenance of testing capacity. The White House noted that the existing lack of critical funding could result in fewer tests made in America, fewer treatments, and the risk of running short on vaccines leaving the U.S. unequipped to deal with future surges.

Certain segments of the hospitality and travel and <sup>1</sup>tourism industry are advocating for the definition of

COVID response resources be expanded to include a second round of Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) grant relief funding. While a second round of grant relief funding is highly unlikely, IAAPA, working in conjunction with the Support Hometown Attractions Coalition, is monitoring this matter closely to ensure that all impacted hospitality and travel and tourism businesses would be eligible for additional grant relief, not just certain segments of the industry. Again, additional grant relief is highly unlikely.

Thank you.



Keith Stephenson  
Director of Public Affairs  
IAAPA North America

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