

## State Association Represents Interests of Iowa's Restaurant and Bar Industry to Legislative Leaders

### Collective Voice to Lawmakers

Because of the breadth of business, insurance, tax, employment, licensing, health, nutrition, and other issues that daily impact restaurants and bars, state and national lawmakers rely on trusted relationships with people well-versed on the collective concerns of the hospitality industry to help guide their decisions.

The Iowa Restaurant Association is the industry's voice to legislators representing the interests of restaurant and bar operators at the Capitol day-in and day-out. If your establishment is not yet a member, get involved today.



### Lobbyist: (def) advocate, educator, supplicant

*The word lobbyist comes from the chambers in which the act of "lobbying" usually takes place, an anteroom near legislative bodies, for instance, or event the lobby of hotels where important people are staying.*

### Seasoned Team

For 15+ years, Iowa's restaurant and retail beverage industries have benefitted from effective representation at the Iowa State Capitol. Craig Walter, a former state representative himself, has been lobbying on behalf of Iowa's restaurants and bars since the early 1990s.



As the IRA lobbyist, Walter spends the better part of January through May at the State Capitol, tracking proposed legislation and amendments, attending committee meetings, and most importantly networking with legislators in the Rotunda—all to ensure the industry's interests remain "top of mind" when state lawmakers consider issues that could impact the hospitality business climate.

Walter is often joined by IRA President and CEO Doni DeNucci, as well as various IRA members, at committee meetings and hearings—ensuring that the concerns of restaurant and bar owners are heard.

### Visible Daily Advocates

One of the simplest and most cost-effective ways hospitality professionals can engage in both the state and national political process and reach the ears of legislative leaders, is membership in the Iowa Restaurant Association (IRA). Regular IRA members also automatically receive dual national membership at no additional cost.

With headquarters in Des Moines and Washington D.C. respectively, the Iowa and National Restaurant Associations (NRA) are visible and present advocates for the restaurant and bar industry to state and national lawmakers. They also serve as the collective voice to the media and public.



# legislative agenda

The Iowa Restaurant Association was founded in 1933 by a group of Iowa restaurateurs who sought to promote a spirit of cooperation among members as well as to encourage and influence legislation impacting the industry. Those foundational tenants have remained at the heart of the organization for its 75+ year history. Over the decades, the Association has successfully promoted the interest of operators. The Association's member-driven legislative agenda continues to address the day-in and day-out concerns of operators across the state.

## 2011 Legislative Priorities

### COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TAX INEQUITIES

Commercial property is taxed at the full 100% valuation of the property while residential and agricultural property pay only a small percentage of valuation. This places an unfair and nearly overwhelming tax burden on small business owners. The IRA, in partnership with other small business advocacy groups, is seeking revision of Iowa's commercial property tax system.

### INSPECTION FEES

Increased inspection fees are simply taxes in another form. The IRA believes the Department of Inspections and Appeals has adequate resources. Fee increases would be yet another burden on struggling business owners.

### AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE ALTERNATIVES

Iowa's restaurant employees need access to affordable, quality health care. Given national healthcare legislation has been passed, the IRA will proactively work with state and national legislators to find solutions that are cost-effective for restaurant owner/operators and employees alike.

### *Iowa's Restaurant Industry— Key Part of State Economy*

Iowa restaurants represent 10 percent of the state's total employment with more than 145,000 workers paid more than \$1 billion in wages annually. In addition, the industry generates significant state sales tax revenue with annual sales of more than \$3.3 billion.

The Iowa Restaurant Association represents the interests of restaurant and tavern operators directly to lawmakers on issues that impact your business.



## Emerging Issues

- TAX HIKES ON RESTAURANT PATRONS** → The IRA opposes allowing cities and counties to impose additional local taxes on patrons of food and beverage establishments (similar to hotel taxes and fees). Such local option taxes would increase consumer prices and impose an unfair playing field on establishments in adjoining communities.
- RIGHT TO SERVE** → The IRA has consistently supported consumer education efforts including the national uniform menu labeling legislation. However, the Association will also proactively support legislative efforts which ensure restaurant owners maintain the right to prepare and serve food that appeals to the marketplace in which they operate. Healthy eating should be promoted by education and information, not mandates or bans on certain ingredients or cooking styles.
- NATIONAL IMMIGRATION REFORM** → The Iowa Restaurant Association and the National Restaurant Association recognize immigration reform is necessary and must be conducted at the national level by Congress. The National Restaurant Association is carrying the concerns of the restaurant industry directly to Congress as solutions are considered.
- IMPACT OF FOOD TO FUEL** → The Iowa Restaurant Association will promote open discussion related to the pros and cons of use of food products in alternative fuel production. Food margins are very tight and restaurant operators track prices closely. Any legislative action that causes a substantial increase in the cost of foods is cause for concern to the industry, as well as consumers.

## Ongoing Issues—Reform Needed

- ELIMINATE DRAM SHOP MANDATES** → The restaurant and retail beverage industry is the only industry selling alcohol that is required to carry additional liability insurance addressing intoxicated persons who cause injury to a third party. Current Dram Shop requirements are not only a repetitive coverage to property insurance, they offer no liability limits and do not require proof a business owner or employee actively contributed to the intoxication of the person causing injury. This requirement places an unfair burden on the industry and should be repealed.
- PREVENT FRIVOLOUS LAWSUITS** → The IRA believes restaurants should not be held legally responsible for serving their customers food that the customer requests. Frivolous lawsuits deny the role of personal responsibility plays in the dietary choices individuals make. Healthy eating should be promoted by education and information, not lawsuits.

### Never Wonder When to Hit the Capitol Steps

Iowa Restaurant Association members receive up-to-the-minute reports about impending legislation, including information about which legislators to call on which topics. These grassroots efforts are part of the IRA's Iowa Grassroots Opportunities (I-GO) Network.

## What is a PAC?

A Political Action Committee (PAC) is a fund that people with shared interests contribute to. Funds are allocated to candidates in both parties that the group feels will best represent their interests. Individuals may give any size contribution to a PAC. Businesses cannot contribute to a PAC. The Iowa Restaurant Association PAC supports state candidates that are advocates for the hospitality industry. Your contribution helps elect people who support your business. You need not be a member of the IRA to contribute.

### Help Elect Candidates That Support Your Business

No donation is too small to assist in the IRA's efforts to support candidates who represent the interests of the hospitality industry. To make a donation to the IRA PAC, send your personal check to IRA PAC, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 47, Des Moines, IA 50322.

Businesses wishing to contribute to the IRA's political and legislative efforts may do so through the Iowa-GO (Grassroots Opportunities) Fund. These contributions may be made directly to the Iowa Restaurant Association.



## All Conversation Power Lives with Majority Party

Nationally at in the Iowa State Legislature, the House Speaker and the Senate Majority Leader exert significant power over what proposed legislation has a serious chance of passing. As the leaders of their respective bodies, their most powerful tool is arguably the power to set the legislative calendars determining when (and if) bills will be debated and voted on. Often, these leaders utilize this power to make sure bills supported by the majority party are passed.

Call  
800-747-1453

or e-mail  
[info@restaurantiowa.com](mailto:info@restaurantiowa.com)  
to join today!

The National Restaurant Association's government relations team is working hard to ensure the voice of America's restaurants are heard in the halls of Congress and at the White House. The NRA's government relations team is led by: Scott DeFife, EVP Public Policy and Government Relations. Contact Scott at [legislative@restaurant.org](mailto:legislative@restaurant.org).



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