

Political Headwinds For Hotels

2008-04-17

Turnout was good this week for a legislative conference organized by the American Hotel & Lodging Association, a trade group. But as they took in cherry blossoms and sunny weather in Washington, hotel execs weren't treated to a favorable political outlook.

"Under the usual rules of political gravity, we Republicans are cooked," said Michael Murphy, founding principal of government relations outfit DC Navigators, on Monday. "In the House and Senate, it's going to be bad for Republicans."

Tuesday, Republican Congressman Ric Keller, whose district includes Orlando, Fla. told the hotel crowd that the upcoming election will be determined by independent voters. "I don't know how independents are going to feel about Iraq six months from now," he added, "but right now they're not too crazy about it."

Not all hoteliers are conservative, of course, but the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) tends to lean that way. And any erosion of the Republican minority could prove a setback for hotel operators, namely on labor issues.

A key labor issue for the industry, which employs 1.8 million: legislation that would permit the formation of unions when a majority of workers sign authorization cards (as opposed to elections by secret ballot). In 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a "card check" bill, but companion legislation never made it out of the Senate.

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Source - Forbes

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