

Illinois Prepares to Break New Ground at Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism

Springfield - Illinois' premier educational forum on tourism, the 14th annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, will be held at the Springfield Crowne Plaza Hotel from February 12-14, 2001. This year's conference, themed "Breaking New Ground," will bring together hundreds of representatives from the state's hotels, convention and visitors bureaus, restaurants, destinations and attractions. "It's no coincidence that the day the Governor's Conference begins, we will break ground on one of the state's most-anticipated new attractions, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum," said Governor George H. Ryan.

"This 'ground breaking' conference links the past with the future through our state's rich Lincoln heritage, as we focus on ways to improve upon the strength of our tourism economy."

Hosted by the Governor and Visit Illinois, this year's conference features a variety of top educational speakers, informative breakout sessions and various networking opportunities.

"This year's Governor's Conference promises to be an excellent one, offering ample opportunity to learn key strategies for increasing tourism to our state. The commitment from Governor Ryan and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism (DCCA/IBOT) has allowed us to secure renowned speakers and, new this year, to add speakers specifically addressing hoteliers' needs throughout the state," said Visit Illinois Chairman Marc Gordon who is also President and CEO of the Hotel Motel Association of Illinois.

Visit Illinois is a not-for-profit membership organization that serves as the primary umbrella for the Illinois travel and tourism industry. The group's 29-member board of directors oversees efforts to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within Illinois with core services focusing on legislative support, education and professional development. Visit Illinois funds the conference with assistance from DCCA/IBOT and private sector sponsorship.

"Tourism has become a powerful economic engine pumping \$22 billion into Illinois' economy," said DCCA Director Pam McDonough. "I encourage our state's tourism representatives to attend the conference, network with other participants, and learn how their area can reap those economic benefits."

The 2001 Conference will include sessions on the current state of Illinois' tourism industry, a look at today's economy, travel industry strategies from hotel and travel-related companies' CEOs and creative approaches to marketing. Breakout sessions will address topics such as media relations, diversity marketing, sport tourism, international tourism and travel research among others.

Companies are invited to showcase their products and services through trade show sponsorships. For additional sponsorship information, please contact Visit Illinois at 312/494-6742 or visitillinois@yahoo.com.

For conference registration information, call 800/823-1542 (TTY: 800/419-0667) or visit the Governor's Conference section of the Illinois Web site, www.enjoyillinois.com.

The Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), Bureau of Tourism works to enhance the economic development climate for the citizens of Illinois.