



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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TRAVEL INDUSTRY LEADERS GATHER FOR THE 2006 ILLINOIS GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

*State's premier tourism education and networking forum
to be held in Springfield, Feb. 22-24, 2006*

The 19th annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, "The Main Event: Winning the Tourism Game," will be held Feb. 22-24, 2006, at the Hilton Springfield. Hosted by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT) and Visit Illinois, the conference provides more than 600 members of Illinois' travel industry with a winning game plan for tourism through an innovative educational program, numerous networking opportunities and the annual Governor's Awards program.

"With travelers spending more than \$24.5 billion throughout Illinois, tourism is a vital contributor to the state's economy," said Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich. "The conference's 2006 theme 'The Main Event: Winning the Tourism Game' celebrates the industry's current achievements and provides attendees with the tools they need to continue building on this success."

DCEO Director Jack Lavin and IBOT Deputy Director Jan Kostner will highlight Illinois' exciting accomplishments and new industry initiatives during the State of the State of Tourism Address on Thursday, Feb. 23. Lavin and Kostner will discuss the changing nature of Illinois tourism and its growing role in statewide economic development. They'll also share the state's plans for the future and talk about changes in the travel industry as a whole.

Additionally, the Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism offers attendees a variety of educational programs that focus on industry trends, research and evaluation, and marketing best practices.

Conference speaker highlights include:

- National Tour Association President **Hank Phillips** applying his 20 years of travel experience and sharing his vision for the coming year;
- Noted futurist **Watts Wacker** discussing how to anticipate and prepare today for the world of tomorrow by recognizing major trends that affect the tourism industry;
- NBC technology expert and Executive Director of blackplanet.com **Omar Wasow** addressing evolving online travel trends and providing tips to identify and better reach the family travel planner through the Web;

-more-

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

- Training/leadership expert and former Disney executive **Doug Lipp** outlining a plan for “service magic” by explaining how certain skills, attitudes and behavior contribute to exceptional performance that can help organizations build, win and retain market share; and
- NFL analyst for Fox News Chicago and former Chicago Bear **Tom Waddle** sharing his motivational stories from the gridiron and his inspirational guidance on personal and professional improvement.

Conference attendees can demonstrate their tourism team spirit at industry networking events, such as the icebreaker reception, or pep rally, at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and a second night social recognizing Illinois' home court advantage offering a playful evening of dining, dancing, music and more.

“The Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism presents the industry with an all-star line-up of educational speakers and networking opportunities that enable us to better strategize for the future and continue to make Illinois a top travel destination,” said Jan Kostner, deputy director, Illinois Bureau of Tourism.

The 19th annual conference will conclude with the Governor's Awards Luncheon on Feb. 24, which recognizes the industry's MVP's who have demonstrated innovative and forward-thinking tourism marketing practices.

For a complete conference schedule and list of speakers or to register for the 2006 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, visit **www.illinoistourismconference.org** or **www.visitillinois.net**, or call **888-658-0749**.

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.

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.