



Serving the Vending and Refreshment Services Industry

January 29, 2014

Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: **Comments on “Examining Conference and Travel Spending Across the Federal Government”**

The National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) is a section 501(c)(6) membership organization representing more than 1,500 members and companies in the food and refreshment vending, coffee service, and food service management industries. NAMA appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments regarding the Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee’s recent hearing on “Examining Conference and Travel Spending Across the Federal Government.” Each year, NAMA, in conjunction with its state associations, hosts a number of business meetings, conferences, conventions, exhibitions, and an annual trade show, all of which are designed to share information, to educate, and to train on best practices and latest industry developments.

Accordingly, as the progress is made on both oversight and review of internal federal conferences, NAMA asks that the Committee specifically note the difference between meetings and conferences hosted by government and those held by associations. Past federal employee presentations presented at NAMA conferences have been helpful to industry leaders by describing new federal regulations and how they apply to the vending industry. Specifically, updates on vending machines regulations pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) pending Calorie Disclosure rules. For federal employees, the opportunity to meet private sector professionals at association meetings and conferences (particularly in the sectors of the economy they regulate and influence) is critical to both them and to the policymaking process for the reasons described below.

Federal agencies benefit from meeting and interacting with experts in their field of oversight at trade or professional association conferences, meetings, and events. Gathering knowledgeable experts and industry participants at association meetings and conferences is a significant resource because it saves the government money in employee training costs on the topics presented due to the amount of first-hand knowledge and technological information shared between industry experts and federal employees in attendance.

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Further, the presence of federal employees at such events also fosters better public policy engagement. During these meetings, association members learn best practices in order to work most productively with government, are appraised of the latest developments in policy and regulations, and learn of potential future challenges to their industries. The federal employees also learn about the impacts of policies and regulations to various industries and can provide valuable insight on possible changes or compliance measures. This knowledge base provided at association conferences is also valuable to the federal employee in assisting them to meet their requirements to protect regulatory impact on small business pursuant to the Regulatory Flexibility Act. Thus, these interactions are mutually beneficial for both the private and the public sectors.

Accordingly, NAMA urges caution on legislative proposals, that while well-intentioned, would have unintended consequences of limiting the kinds of meetings and information exchange that is in the best interest of American taxpayers.

We reiterate our request that Congress and the Administration refrain from imposing wholesale restrictions on federal employee attendance at association conferences and educational events. Should you have any questions regarding NAMA or the aforementioned comments, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,



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cc: Dan Mathews, NAMA VP & COO
Eric Dell, NAMA SVP, Government Affairs

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