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## **FRLA President and CEO Carol Dover and Local Hoteliers and Restaurateurs Report Florida is Open for Business**

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association's (FRLA) President and CEO Carol Dover held a press conference today with Northwest Florida hoteliers and restaurateurs to report that the Sunshine State is open for business. The press conference was held at the Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front in Pensacola Beach this morning. Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink also participated in today's conference.

"Florida is open for business. Florida beaches have not been closed. No oil has washed ashore. Seafood is safe to eat and charter fishing boats are running daily. But we must stop sending the message that the world's most beautiful beaches are covered in oil," said Carol Dover, President and CEO of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association.

"There have been reports that the whole north part of the coast is closed for fishing, and that is just not the case," said Bruce Craul, COO of Legendary Inc. "Our folks are fishing everyday and red snapper season opens June 1. It is business as usual, the coast is clear, and charter boats in Destin are running," continued Craul, who also serves as the Secretary Treasurer of FRLA.

Florida tourism enjoys over 80 million visitors each year, with over 14 million visiting the Panhandle area. Regionally, there are 3,200 restaurants and 1,600 hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals which account for over 80,000 rooms.

"There have been no significant cancellations, and just today we see that May's overall pace of bookings has been flat over this time last year," said Julian MacQueen, CEO of Innisfree Hotels. "In fact, we find only 20 percent of the people actually go to the water. People are here for the overall experience, incredible views, amazing sunsets, beautiful fishing opportunities and all the things Pensacola Beach brings."

"We are watching closely and have recently posted actual photos and videos from our sites, which are updated on a daily basis so people have a visual reference," said Park Brady, CEO of ResortQuest. "As for bookings, we are lowering the risk and modifying our cancellation policies. We are not going to risk your deposits and we are committed to being honest and accurate – and people are coming back."

"We know the oil spill is a threat and need to plan ahead," said Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink. "It is important for local businesses to keep very organized and detailed records of any lost business, because we will hold BP accountable for any lost business as a result of the spill."

The Association encourages all business owners to keep accurate records of any and all cancellations, along with the number of employees that may have had to be let go. This is important documentation that our industry will need in the coming weeks and months. We encourage our members to begin the claims process by contacting the BP Claims Hotline by calling 1-800-440-0858. Please go to [www.FRLA.org](http://www.FRLA.org) for this and all updates on the BP oil spill.

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**About FRLA:**

In existence since 1946, the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association is Florida's premier nonprofit, hospitality industry trade association. FRLA safeguards the needs of the hospitality industry, improves the business climate, promotes the highest levels of quality and safety for our patrons, provides legislative advocacy, and eases navigation of government regulation. The Association represents and serves more than 10,000 independent and household name members, including theme parks and the largest casual theme restaurant company in the world. For more information, please go to [www.FRLA.org](http://www.FRLA.org).