

Highlights from the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association Annual Conference in Bend, OR (Sept 19 and 20)

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This year's [Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association \(ORLA\)](#) annual conference represents the culmination (and celebration) of months of hard work by the boards and members of both the former Oregon Lodging Association and the Oregon Restaurant Association to bring the two organizations together under a single common roof. While the number of restaurant members greatly exceed the number of lodging members, the newly combined organization has made a great effort to ensure that the interests of both constituencies are fairly represented. I applaud the efforts of Steve McCoid, Jeff Hampton and the other ORLA staff members and wish the newly combined organization continued success. Well done.

As to the actual program, the highlight of the first day for the lodging members was likely Smith Travel's update and forecast of key Oregon lodging metrics. A few highlights:

- Quite unexpectedly, transient lodging demand has staged a strong recovery (despite continued unemployment challenges)
- Year-over-year improvement in occupancy was the story for most segments and regions in the Oregon market, but rate continues to be the challenge
- Continued rate discounting on the transient side has led (and will continue to lead) to serious rate challenges in the group segment for the upcoming 16 – 18 months

Let [me](#) know if you would like a complete copy of Smith Travel's presentation.

The second day included great presentations on (i) green lodging trends (hats off to Steve Faulstick and the Westmont team at the [Portland Doubletree](#) and Jon Tullis and his team at the [Timberline Lodge](#) for the examples they've set in adopting sustainable (and expense-reducing) practices in their hotel's operations) and (ii) recent developments in federal law and their effect on Northwest hotel and restaurant owners (check this blog for future posts on these developments and [AHLA's excellent summary](#)).

While the mood in the conference hallways was somewhat subdued (largely because of continued uncertainty over the future of the Northwest economy), the conference proved once again the great value in attending these meetings and re-connecting with friends and clients.

I look forward to seeing what the newly combined organization has planned next fall.

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