



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Boondoggle, Junket Mentality Threatens \$198 Million in Convention Business in Spokane County

Hundreds of Millions at Stake in Spokane

(Spokane, Washington, March 6, 2009) - All across the nation, the meeting and convention industry is under attack, an assault which could cost the Spokane Region hundreds of millions of dollars in business and thousands of jobs.

In 2008, 162 meetings, conventions and events were held in Spokane County generating \$198.4 million in economic impact. Meetings mean business.

Media reports exposing irresponsible spending by major corporations receiving taxpayer assistance and then using that money to pay for extravagant retreats is now causing responsible companies and organizations to second guess their own convention plans.



The Spokane Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau is standing with its partners regionally and nationally to protect the positive reputation of the convention and meeting industry. The CVB hosted a rally in downtown

Spokane March 6 with the support of more than 200 elected officials, business owners and frontline employees wearing pins and carrying banners with the [Meetings Mean Business](#) message. The NBC affiliate, KHQ-TV, even streamed the rally live on their Web site, KHQ.com.

PHOTO EDITORS NOTE: THESE PHOTOS AND MORE FROM THE SPOKANE MEETINGS MEAN BUSINESS RALLY CAN BE [DOWNLOADED](#) FOR PUBLICATION.

Spokane Mayor Mary Verner, Spokane County Commissioner Mark Richard and local business owner Deena Caruso stood with Spokane Regional



Convention & Visitors Bureau President & CEO Harry Sladich and Spokane Public Facilities District Executive Director Kevin Twohig in proclaiming the economic accelerator generated by convention business as part of the [Meetings Mean Business](#) campaign launched this week by the U.S. Travel Association.



The timing for taking a stand is crucial as the CVB's sales team is preparing for a blitz next week in Washington, D.C., in an effort to lure major convention groups to our community.

The CVB has taken several steps proactively to generate more convention business and inform the business community on the economic impact of conventions and meetings:

- The CVB has partnered with efforts lead by the Seattle Convention & Visitors Bureau to create a new Web site, www.WhyTourismMatters.com. A river guide from Spokane Parks and Recreation and a wait person from a local restaurant will be featured on the site as tourism ambassadors alongside their peers from across the state. The new site launches Monday, March 9, 1:30pm PST.
- The CVB Sales Team is heading to Washington, D.C., next week for a blitz of meeting planners and professional organizations to generate new convention leads.
- The CVB has formed the www.HartfordMadisonSpokane.com alliance offering incentives for meeting planners who book two of the three cities.
- The CVB is bringing its hotel, restaurant and retail partners together to support the U.S. Travel Association's *Meetings Mean Business* campaign launched this week.

Compelling Campaign



*Want to lose one million more jobs?
Just keep talking.*

The U.S. Travel Association used this headline to kick off [Meetings Mean Business](#), a national ad campaign that began this week in *USA Today*.

More than half (52%) claim the news coverage has been extremely or

moderately influential on their companies' decisions as to whether or not they will hold events, according to Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. The meeting planners surveyed by *Meetings & Conventions* magazine indicated a fear of being singled out and vilified by the media, according to Dow. The survey results will be published in the April issue of *Meetings & Conventions* magazine.

The U.S. Travel Association launched a new Web site, www.MeetingsMeanBusiness.com, with information detailing the importance nationally of convention business.

National Statistics Staggering

According to the U.S. Travel Association:

- Business travel creates 2.4 million jobs. Meetings & events are directly responsible for 1 million jobs in the United States.
- Nearly 200,000 travel-related jobs were lost in 2008, with another 247,000 predicted to be lost in 2009 (US Labor and Commerce Department).
- If the 1 million jobs generated by meetings and events were to be lost, the U.S. unemployment rate would rise from 7.6% to 8.2%.
- Business travel accounts for \$240 billion in spending and \$39 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state, and local levels.

Several national partners have joined with the [U.S. Travel Association](#) to support the *Meetings Mean Business* campaign including:

[National Business Travel Association](#) (NBTA)
[American Hotel & Lodging Association](#) (AHLA)
[International Association of Exhibitions and Events](#) (IAEE)
[Meeting Planners International](#) (MPI)
[Professional Convention Management Association](#) (PCMA)
[Destination Marketing Association International](#) (DMAI)
[Site Global](#)
[American Society of Association Executives](#) (ASAE)

About Spokane Regional CVB

The Spokane Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau generates economic growth for Spokane County by successfully marketing the Spokane Region as the destination for conventions and leisure travelers from around the world. The proof is in: Visitors to Spokane County spent an estimated \$805.1 million in 2007, providing jobs for nearly 10,100 residents and generating \$60.3 million in non-resident tax dollars collected in Spokane County.*

**Figures provided by the Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development Tourism Office in the [October 2008 Dean Runyan Associates report](#) for the year ending 2007.*

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