

Marriott CEO Calls for 'Sober' Discussion of Immigration Reform in Presidential Campaign

Bill Marriott Says Employers Need Workable Employment Verification System

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 17 /PRNewswire/ -- Citing the need for comprehensive immigration reform, J.W. "Bill" Marriott, Jr. today expressed hope that the presidential campaigns would "move to a sober discussion of immigration reform."

"We need to cool the rhetoric and work together to come up with a federal solution," he said. Marriott, who is chairman and chief executive officer of Marriott International, Inc. , said that complying with a myriad of local immigration laws is impractical for any national employer. "With expected growth, the hospitality industry alone will need an additional 300,000 workers in the next several years.

"We need immigrant workers in our economy and we need to create a workable verification system so that employers like us know that they're hiring people who are authorized to work," he said.

Marriott pointed to one of the most successful employee programs at his company, "Sed de Saber," which is Spanish for "thirst for knowledge." He said hundreds of employees are using the system to learn critical English language skills because they want to be productive workers and hope someday to realize their dream to become Americans.

Marriott also cited the importance of removing the barriers to global travel. "We need to make our visa and entry systems more efficient and customer-friendly because we're losing a tremendous opportunity to bring visitors to the U.S.," he said.

Marriott acknowledged progress made by the government in securing a new China travel agreement signed last month that will facilitate Chinese group travel to the U.S., while saying there were opportunities for continued improvement.

"The Department of Homeland Security and the State Department need to make better use of technology to process people more efficiently and share information amongst different agencies to eliminate bureaucracy, delay and duplication.

"And our industry needs to do our part -- so we're working with congress to get the funding DHS and State need to increase their staffing, get better technology, improve their infrastructure and enhance customer service," said Marriott.

"Bottom line, travel is trade. It's also our best form of public diplomacy. Here in the United States we need to put out the welcome mat at our borders, airports and embassies around the world. Security must be a priority. But appropriate security processes must allow an open exchange of people, ideas, services and products," he said.

To view a video of the speech, visit www.marriottnewsroom.com and click on the news release. The link will be available beginning approximately 7 p.m. eastern time, today, January 17.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, INC. is a leading lodging company with more than 2,900 lodging properties in the United States and 67 other countries and territories. Marriott International operates and franchises hotels under the Marriott, JW Marriott, The Ritz-Carlton, Renaissance, Residence Inn, Courtyard, TownePlace Suites, Fairfield Inn, SpringHill Suites and Bulgari brand names; develops and operates vacation ownership resorts under the Marriott Vacation Club, Horizons by Marriott Vacation Club, The Ritz-Carlton Club and Grand Residences by Marriott brands; operates Marriott Executive Apartments; provides furnished corporate housing through its Marriott ExecuStay division; and operates conference centers. The company is headquartered in Bethesda, Md., and had approximately 151,000 employees at 2006 year-end. It is ranked as the lodging industry's most admired company and one of the best places to work for by FORTUNE(R). The company is also a 2006 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ENERGY STAR(R) Partner. In fiscal year 2006, Marriott International reported sales from continuing operations of \$12.2 billion. For more information or reservations, please visit our web site at www.marriott.com.

