

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

June 26, 2009

The Honorable Rahm Emanuel
Chief of Staff
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Rahm:

I am writing to ask for your assistance to reverse the current informal federal policy which prohibits and/or discourages government meetings and conferences in Las Vegas and other cities on the basis that they are too leisure oriented to be awarded such business. Specifically, I ask that you issue a directive or letter to federal agencies indicating that this is not a permissible consideration in selecting locations for government meetings and conferences. Every hotel in America is leisure oriented.

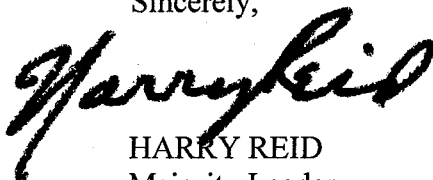
Over last few months, several Las Vegas businesses have been told that Las Vegas facilities would not be considered as a travel destination for government meeting or convention travel because Las Vegas is also vacation and leisure destination. For example, in one case, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conference was relocated from Las Vegas to another city on the order of the FBI Director on this basis. We are aware of similar action being taken by the General Services Agency and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Just last month, I testified before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on the critical economic impact that travel plays in Nevada and across the United States. Even during these difficult economic times, Las Vegas remains an unmatched destination featuring superior amenities, convenience and value. Las Vegas has more than 10 million square feet of convention space, nearly 2,000 restaurants and 140,000 hotel rooms, with another 13,000 scheduled to open this year. The average nightly room rate is \$98, which is far lower than most of major convention cities.

While Las Vegas has a well-earned reputation as a world-class dining and entertainment destination, it also offers an unmatched location for conducting business in terms of cost and availability of convention and related space. It is my view that travel decisions made by federal agencies should be based upon these considerations.

I greatly appreciate your assistance in resolving this matter to ensure that Las Vegas is no longer subjected to this highly detrimental informal federal policy.

Sincerely,



HARRY REID
Majority Leader