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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TOURISM HONORS SENATOR SIMMONS** **FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**



ORLANDO, FL (February 3, 2014): The Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association (CFHLA) is proud to honor **David Simmons, State Senator for District 10**, with the **2013 CFHLA Public Servant of the Year Award**. This annual award is presented to an elected leader who has demonstrated dedication to the advancement of the Central Florida tourism and hospitality industry.

Elected to the Florida Senate in 2010, Simmons served as a member of the Florida House of Representatives from 2000 until 2008. Senator Simmons has been a tireless advocate of the hospitality industry throughout his tenure in the State Legislature and is committed to preserving the integrity of the tourist development tax, also referred to as the “bed tax,” which was created by hoteliers to support destination marketing efforts.

Senator Simmons understands the impact of tourism on Central Florida’s economy. Preliminary figures show that in 2013, Central Florida welcomed more than **58 million visitors!** Travel to Orlando and Central Florida infuses **\$31.7 billion** in spending by visitors, employs more than **367,000** people and provides local and state governments with **\$7 billion** in tax revenues annually.

Throughout his 14 years of public service, Senator Simmons has distinguished himself as a champion of the hospitality industry. During the 2012 Legislative Session, he supported a 55% increase in annual funding for **VISIT FLORIDA** in the amount to **\$54 million** for Fiscal Year 2012-2013, and an increase the following year to **\$63.5 million** for FY 2013-2014.

During the 2013 Legislative Session, he sponsored the successful passage of **SB 726, Relating to Regulation of Family or Medical Leave Benefits for Employees**, which effectively protects Florida’s businesses from a patchwork of local government mandates requiring specific employee benefits not otherwise required by state or federal law.

This award will be officially presented at the **CFHLA STR Luncheon on Friday, February 28, from noon until 1:30 PM** at the **Hilton Orlando**. More than 400 industry professionals and community leaders are expected to attend.

CFHLA congratulates and offers its sincere gratitude to Senator Simmons for advancing the hospitality industry through his leadership and public service.

To learn more about CFHLA, please visit our website: [www.cfhla.org](http://www.cfhla.org)

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*The Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association is the world’s largest regional hotel association, representing approximately 80% of the hotel rooms in Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties.*