February 21, 2016

Dear OHA Members,

We are writing with an update on the labor dispute at the Renaissance Long Beach, the site of our 2016 Annual Meeting in Long Beach, California. Cliff Kuhn provided information about the dispute to members at our Annual Meeting in Tampa last October, and we would now like to write to the full membership with an update.

The OHA signed a contract to host our 2016 annual meeting with the Renaissance Long Beach in February 2014. In May of 2015 Renaissance Long Beach Hotel employees filed a dispute with the National Labor Relations Board and in June of 2015 we learned that the hotel had been placed on a list of hotels with a labor dispute by UNITE-HERE, the union working with the hotel employees. By the end of last year, the dispute had escalated to the point where UNITE-HERE is now calling for a boycott of the hotel.

We make every attempt to choose hotels with good labor practices when planning our annual meetings and our contract does allow us to terminate our agreement in the event of a full labor strike. Unfortunately, our contract with the Renaissance Long Beach does not allow us to move the meeting due to a boycott without incurring penalties (of more than $109,000) that would be catastrophic for the finances and future of the OHA. After careful consideration, the OHA Council and Executive Committee have decided that we cannot move the meeting at this point without endangering the survival of our organization.

However, we are committed to working to support the organizing of the hotel workers and UNITE-HERE in every possible way. To start:

* We will be sharing a list of alternative local hotels with fair labor practices, and our overflow hotel will be on the fair hotel list.
* We are only spending the minimum amount that we are contractually obligated to at the Renaissance, and have moved all of our major events offsite.

We are in ongoing conversation with organizers at UNITE-HERE about ways to support them and the hotel workers. If you are interested in discussing ways of showing affirmative solidarity with UNITE-HERE, you may contact former OHA President Paul Ortiz, who is coordinating those efforts. Please also feel free to contact the hotel directly to share any concerns you have about this issue: 1-562-437-5900.

Our 2017 hotel is on the fair hotel list. We also want to prevent this situation re-occurring in the future, and so after the Tampa annual meeting we convened a Site Selection Task Force to review and suggest revisions to our conference site selection procedures. The members of that task force have been hard at work, and at our Mid-Winter meeting in Atlanta the Council passed a resolution to add broader protective language to our future hotel contracts (see attached).

Our leadership is in close contact with the organizers from UNITE-HERE. We have sent a letter to the Renaissance conveying our support for the union and expectation that they continue negotiations to address the labor issues in their business. We will continue these conversations, and continue to update members, throughout this year. You can follow the situation as it evolves on the OHA website page Hotel Updates.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions or concerns. We understand that this situation will put many of you in a challenging ethical position, as it has us, and we look forward to working with you to enact the values of the OHA while ensuring our organization will survive for another fifty years.

Sincerely,

OHA Council and Executive Committee

Anne Valk (President), Doug Boyd (Vice President), Todd Moye (First Vice President), Paul Ortiz (Past President), [Kristine Navarro-McElhaney](https://plus.google.com/u/0/102808127149850032876?prsrc=4), Amy Starecheski, Allison Tracy, Claytee White (Council members)