

**PUBLIC HEARING
ON
PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING ON
“THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA –
FINANCIAL IMPACTS”
Committee on Finance and Revenue
Councilmember Jack Evans, Chair**

FEBRUARY 12, 2008

**TESTIMONY OF
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Good morning, Committee Chairman Evans and members of the Committee on Finance and Revenue, it is an honor to address this committee and present testimony on the “Inauguration of President Barack Obama – Financial Impacts.”

My name is Paul Cohn and I am Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW) and Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of Capital Restaurant Concepts. With me today is Lynne Breaux, President of RAMW, a trade association representing over 600 restaurants and food service industry professionals in DC and in Northern Virginia.

The Inauguration of Barack Obama was a once in a lifetime event, even in this city of many events. This was an incredible, huge, and historic occasion for the millions of people on the mall and surrounding areas. But it was really so much more – this was an unprecedented collaboration of an amazing number of federal, state and local agencies spread across three jurisdictions coming together in seamless cooperation to pull off the biggest, most peaceful gathering in U.S. history. Everyone involved in the planning and execution of the logistics of the Inauguration has our heartfelt appreciation and sincere thanks.

This experience drove home the knowledge that transportation infrastructure is essential to engendering successful mass events such as this Inauguration as well as to ensuring a thriving hospitality community. Having the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) expand their bus and rail service during the Inauguration facilitated the transport of restaurant employees, patrons, visitors and citizens. This partnership of restaurants, patrons and transportation, as clearly illustrated by the Inauguration, gives testimony to the need to strengthen and build on these

relationships for the future growth of the city at large. We are particularly thankful to WMATA General Manager John Catoe, Jr. and Chairman of the WMATA Board, D.C. Councilmember Jim Graham for all their efforts in general and particularly during the long Inauguration Weekend.

As with the public entities, the business community pulled together to work within unusual and restrictive security parameters to play host to the millions of visitors. The sheer volume of visitors ensured a welcome boost in revenue for many of our restaurants.

Despite some skepticism, the expansion of restaurant service hours exceeded expectations. We greatly appreciate the support from the Mayor's Office and the Council on the hours extension. We have been receiving glowing reports that businesses and patrons acted responsibly with restaurants serving as warm havens of hospitality to our many visitors throughout the Inauguration celebration.

As "on the ground" hosts for our city, both at their doors and in the media, restaurants provided the face of hospitality to the millions who attended or watched from around the world. The value of this exposure is incalculable. And the continuing positive national and international press coverage of DC as a dining destination with hot restaurants and nightlife has enhanced the city's profile for the benefit of us all.

Thank you, Chairman Evans and Committee Members, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington and for all of your hard work towards the great success of the Inauguration.