



For Immediate Release

Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association Executive Director Jim Sprouse to Retire After More Than 20 Years of Service

ATLANTA (Sept. 25, 2025) — Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association (GHLA) today announced the upcoming retirement of Jim Sprouse, GHLA's Executive Director, effective Dec. 31, 2025. For more than 20 years, Sprouse has championed Georgia's hotel and lodging industry with his visionary and committed leadership.

"Through more than 20 years of exceptional service, Jim Sprouse grew GHLA into a nationally respected organization," said Ramon Reyes, GHLA Board Chair and Managing Director of Omni Atlanta Hotel at Centennial Park. "We thank Jim for his years of service, his advocacy and foresight, and his dedication to our members, industry, and mission."

As part of a longstanding succession plan, Chris Hardman, GHLA's Director of Governmental Affairs and Membership, has been selected by the Board to serve as the next Executive Director beginning Jan. 1, 2026. Hardman brings a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry and has earned national honors, including the ISHA Award of Excellence in Governmental Affairs, the GACVB Tourism Champion Award, and the STS Shining Example Award. He was a key proponent of the passage of Georgia House Bill 317, now a law requiring short-term rental platforms to collect and remit hotel-motel taxes that is recognized as the greatest tourism revenue driver in Georgia in more than 50 years.

"Jim's dedication, hard work, and loyalty have made GHLA into what it is today," said Ivy Mpofu, Embassy Suites by Hilton at Centennial Olympic Park. "His contributions over the last two decades have made a lasting impact on our success and culture as an organization. His professionalism, commitment, and teamwork set a standard that inspires those around him, and we are fortunate to have Jim in our industry. He lives what it means to lead with kindness. We are so grateful for all he has done and will miss him terribly."

During his time leading GHLA, Sprouse strengthened advocacy efforts at the state level, expanded member services, championed workforce development, and deftly navigated industry challenges that included a global pandemic. Sprouse was instrumental in securing a \$150 million federal grant announced by Gov. Brian Kemp in 2022, which provided much-needed funding to help hotel operators and hotel employees return to work at pre-pandemic levels.

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Also under Sprouse's leadership, GHLA:

- Created one of the nation's largest recognition programs for lodging industry employees, recognizing all disciplines of associates and now attracting more than 1,000 attendees annually.
- Created the first statewide educational/networking organization for women in lodging — now serving hundreds of women across Georgia.
- Initiated a widely respected annual lodging forecast program to assist hoteliers in planning for their future each year.
- Expanded GHLA's reach to hospitality leaders as well as next-generation leaders through a network of regional hotel councils aimed at supporting their business success.

"Jim Sprouse is a legend. No one worked harder to get GHLA through good times and bad," said Jay Morgan, founder of J.L. Morgan Co. "Now, Chris Hardman is ready to take GHLA to new heights with his knowledge and relentless energy. I'm proud to be on this team and help with a seamless transition."

About GHLA: *GHLA is the state's non-partisan trade association representing the lodging industry and its role in Georgia tourism, which has an impact of more than \$80 billion on the state's economy. GHLA members represent hotels from around the state and include national franchises and independent lodging. For more information, go to www.GHLA.net.*

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