



**FLORIDA
RESTAURANT &
LODGING
ASSOCIATION**

NEWS

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Governor Ron DeSantis Signs FRLA Priority Bill to Protect Hotels from Squatters

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) today praised Governor Ron DeSantis for signing Senate Bill 606 on Transient Occupancy to protect Florida hoteliers from squatting nonpaying guests. At The Westin Sarasota, Governor DeSantis was surrounded by business owners, legislators, and law enforcement to highlight the importance of property rights for a free society.

“The signing of Senate Bill 606 is a critical win for Florida’s hospitality industry,” **said Carol Dover, President & CEO of FRLA.** “Our hotels must be able to focus on providing world-renowned experiences for our guests and not on lengthy, bureaucratic roadblocks to evict bad actor squatters. By clearly distinguishing between guests and tenants, this legislation protects our hoteliers from costly legal delays and ensures that rooms are available for paying customers. We applaud Governor DeSantis for recognizing the importance of this issue and once again standing with our industry to support common-sense reform.”

During the bill signing, **Gil Reyes, Regional General Manager of The Westin Sarasota and President of FRLA’s Suncoast Chapter, said,** “At its core, this bill brings much-needed clarity and modernization to how we define and manage lodging establishments in Florida. This clarity will help reduce confusion and ensure more consistent enforcement and understanding in the industry. The legislation is a win for Florida’s hospitality industry. Thank you, Governor DeSantis, your commitment to strengthening our state’s hospitality industry and ensuring clarity in our regulatory framework means a great deal to all of us.”

Prior to the bill signing, public lodging establishments were forced to go through the landlord/tenant eviction process to remove guests who refused to pay their hotel bills or depart the hotel. A lengthy process, this has created a significant financial burden for the hotel while occupying rooms that could be sold to paying guests.

SB 606 clarifies the definitions of transient and non-transient occupancy and helps public lodging establishment operators and their guests better differentiate between a guest and a tenant. The legislation – SB 606 by Senator Tom Leek (R-Ormond Beach) and HB 535 by Representative Chad Johnson (R-Chiefland) – was championed by FRLA and passed with bipartisan support.

About FRLA: The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) is Florida's premier non-profit hospitality industry trade association. Founded in 1946 as the Florida Restaurant Association, FRLA merged with the Florida Hotel and Motel Association in 2006. FRLA's more than 10,000 members include independent hoteliers and restaurateurs, household name franchises, theme parks and suppliers. The association's mission is to protect, educate and promote Florida's nearly \$112 billion hospitality industry which represents nearly two million employees. Dedicated to safeguarding the needs of the membership, FRLA provides legislative advocacy to ensure the voices of its members are heard and their interests are protected. The association offers regulatory compliance and food safety training through [SafeStaff®](#) and FRLA's subsidiary, [RCS Training](#). The FRLA [Educational Foundation](#) provides industry-developed, career-building high school programs throughout the state.

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