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For Immediate Release

**GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION EXPRESSES DISMAY AS GOVERNOR DEAL  
SIGNS THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION REFORM AND ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2011**

(Atlanta, GA) – Today, the Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA) voiced dismay as Governor Nathan Deal signed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011. The Association believes that the economic consequences of this bill are so potentially severe that they could damage our international and domestic reputation for current and future business.

As the state's second largest private sector employer, restaurants provide Georgians with over 384,000 jobs that result in \$14.1 billion in sales; thereby contributing \$962 million in taxes to Georgia's income. Arizona has already suffered a loss of up to \$217 million in tourism and convention business as a result of their law passage.

"We cannot escape the harsh realities of our nation's recession, which has harmed so many people and businesses in Georgia," said Karen Bremer, GRA Executive Director. "That's why we are so deeply disappointed by this legislation, which unjustly punishes our small businesses, local municipalities and communities for the failure of a federal policy."

The Association stressed that it does not support illegal immigration and commends any action that identifies and prosecutes hardened criminals, especially those involved in drugs, trafficking or organized crime. "What we need is comprehensive federal immigration reform, including increased border security and a workable employment verification program," said Bremer.

In a recent report, it was estimated that nationally, employers spent \$95 million in 2010 to comply with the E-verify system. The report also concluded that it costs small businesses an average of \$127 per new hire to comply. In Georgia, the average restaurant has 38 employees with a 107% turnover rate, meaning the verification process would need to be conducted 65 times a year.

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“It will cost our local small businesses thousands of dollars to comply, not to mention the risk of boycotts and lost tourism and convention business,” said Bremer. “Why would we elect to put Georgia at an economic disadvantage and jeopardize our fragile recovery?”

The Association also voiced support for those seeking an injunction against the legislation. “We applaud like-minded concerned citizens for taking a stand against this damaging and misdirected legislation,” said Bremer.

Across the nation, the restaurant community has voiced its willingness to work with Congress to find a responsible and realistic solution to this complex and contentious issue. In the wake of the legislation, the Association will focus on educating restaurants about compliance, while continuing to advocate for a solution that keeps our state economically strong and strengthens our reputation as a leader.

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**About the Georgia Restaurant Association**

The GRA’s mission is to serve as the voice for Georgia’s Restaurants in Advocacy, Education and Awareness. The GRA is sanctioned by the National Restaurant Association (NRA) to operate Georgia’s only not-for-profit representing the state’s foodservice industry. From large chains to start-ups, the GRA helps make Georgia a better place for restaurants to do business and helps make restaurants better for Georgia.

For media inquiries, please contact the Georgia Restaurant Association at 404.467.9000.