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## **THORNTON NAMED 2009 NJRA CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**

### **INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANT EXPERT AIMS TO LEAD GROUP'S EFFORTS ON KEY ISSUES IN TRENTON**

TRENTON, N.J.—The New Jersey Restaurant Association (NJRA) announced that Jimmy Thornton, director of catering at The Grand Summit Hotel/Blackburn Tavern, Summit, N.J., has been named 2009 chairman of the board. Thornton previously served as vice president.

“I look forward to helping the NJRA’s efforts in Trenton on public policy issues such as taxes, lowering the cost of healthcare, and having a strong voice when issues involving immigration arise,” said Thornton.

The restaurant and hospitality industry plays a vital role in the economy of the state because of the wide range of opportunities and jobs created, according to Thornton. “The restaurant and hospitality industry has more than 300,000 employees, making it the state’s largest private sector employer. Restaurants account for nearly one-third of the state’s tourism industry and its workers serve as ambassadors of tourism for New Jersey,” said Thornton

“We are excited to have Jimmy as our new chairman,” said Deborah Dowdell, NJRA president. “A person with both his international and New Jersey-

based experience in all aspects of the restaurant industry will be a wonderful asset.”

Thornton, an avid marathon runner, learned the restaurant industry from his parents who owned several businesses in South Africa. He has worked at a variety of restaurants and hotels in South Africa, England, and the United States. He will implement an NJRA “Table Talk” series in all 21 counties in the state where local restaurant owners and local government figures will have the opportunity to discuss legislative, economic, and restaurant topics.

A resident of East Brunswick, Thornton is married and the father of two children.

The NJRA represents owners and operators of full-service restaurants, catering facilities, taverns & pubs, brew pubs, diner restaurants, hotel restaurants, coffee shops, limited & quick service restaurants, institutional feeders, delis pizzerias, country clubs, culinary students and schools. Today, the New Jersey restaurant and hospitality industry includes 23,000 eating and drinking establishments generating \$12 billion in annual sales and employing 311,000 people. Visit [www.njra.org](http://www.njra.org).

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