A Salute to
Travel & Tourism Workers

It’s going to be another record summer for travel in the U.S., and I think it is time to recognize and honor the employees of the Travel & Tourism industry who work so hard – and often overtime – to make it possible and safe for people to travel.

Susan Cook, senior vice president of research for the Travel Industry Association of America (TIAA), predicts that despite the higher cost of airline tickets, air travel will increase by 4 percent this summer over last year’s record numbers. According to TIAA, Americans will make a total of 325.6 million leisure person-trips this June, July and August. A person-trip is one person traveling 50 miles or more, one-way, away from home.

Highways are packed, national parks and monuments are crowded, airport lines seem endless, and hotels are running at capacity. It is hard enough on travelers, but the biggest strain is on the workers who are trying desperately to meet the needs of all those passengers and guests.

I saw this personally a couple of weeks ago when I was sitting in the United Airlines (UA) waiting area in the Phoenix airport. With bad weather on the East Coast and a couple of aircraft experiencing mechanical problems, flights were delayed, connections were missed, and those in the waiting area were getting restless. It was not a good day for United. However, the UA ground crew kept their cool, worked as a team, and handled the situation flawlessly. I was impressed by the professionalism they displayed.

About the same time, I received two separate phone calls from friends who on different nights had stayed at the Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport, operated by Outrigger Lodging Services. Both had been stranded at Denver airport by cancelled evening flights and sent to the Hilton Garden Inn for the night. They found the lobby packed with tired, angry passengers but told me how professionally the staff handled the situation, quickly and efficiently getting almost everyone a room or finding alternate accommodations for those they could not handle.

I know Outrigger and OHANA hotels in Hawaii and across the Pacific are currently running at high capacity, as we experience peak summer travel in Hawaii and peak winter travel south of the equator.

In Waikiki, our hotels are getting an added boost from the Rim of the Pacific (Rimpac) training exercises that have brought thousands of military personnel from Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States together in Hawaiian waters for joint training this month. This is one of the largest biennial Rimpac exercises ever held, and almost all of our Waikiki properties are hosting participants.

It all adds up to a great deal of pressure on people in every department and every hotel. I have seen our ‘ohana rise to the occasion time after time before this, and I am sure you will do so again this summer. I am proud of each and every one of you, and I appreciate everything you do to make sure our guests have a memorable, pleasant experience at every Outrigger and OHANA hotel.