Hughes Not Thrilled About Gulf Bill

NGCOA LEADER SAYS LAW, WHICH EXCLUDES GOLF COURSES AND CLUBS FROM TAX BENEFITS, IS OUTRAGEOUS

Mike Hughes is not happy that golf facilities have been grouped with booze, bets and backrubs by U.S. lawmakers. Hughes, the CEO of the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA), is even angrier that lawmakers have excluded golf courses and clubs from tax benefits created by the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005.

In December, lawmakers passed a bill that creates about $8 billion in tax benefits and relief to Gulf Coast businesses affected by recent hurricanes. However, golf courses and clubs are excluded from those benefits. The law states that “provisions do not apply with respect to any private or commercial golf course, country club, massage parlor, hot tub facility, suntan facility or any store the principal business of which is the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption off premises.”

Hughes said lawmakers do not understand the golf industry and the contributions golf course owners and operators make to local communities. The NGCOA contends the bill was intended to satisfy House conservatives.

“...singled out like this...as though the owners and operators of golf courses in this region are not part of the mainstream business community and do not make significant contributions to local economies...is outrageous,” he said.

The bill, which President Bush said was introduced to help small businesses, provides access to tax breaks that includes accelerated depreciation, deduction of demolition and clean-up costs, operating loss carryback, and an employee retention tax credit for employers in the disaster zones.

Hughes said golf is a centerpiece for the tourism industry in the Gulf Coast region and is responsible for generating millions of dollars in revenues and thousands of jobs. “A golf course is no different than a restaurant or movie theater when it comes to hurricane relief,” Hughes added.