



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION NAMES SAM TOIA AS NEW PRESIDENT

(Chicago, Ill. – July 25, 2012) – The [Illinois Restaurant Association \(IRA\)](#), the largest foodservice trade association in Illinois, has announced Sam Toia as its new President following a vote at the Association's quarterly Board of Directors meeting earlier today. Toia, who most recently operated 13 Leona's Restaurants and two Hop Haus Sports Pubs, previously served as the Association's Chairman of the Board.

"There are very few people who have as much passion and genuine concern for the restaurant community than Sam," said John Colletti, Managing Partner of Gibson's Steakhouse, and who will now serve as Chairman of the Board (he previously served as First Vice Chair prior to Toia's appointment as President). "As our Chairman, he was relentless in his advocacy for the betterment and growth of our industry. Under his devoted and experienced leadership, the future looks great for the IRA."

As president, Toia will be responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the Association and will act as the chief representative of the largest private sector employer in the State, which posted 516,000 jobs in 2012.

“I’m honored by the opportunity to represent one of Illinois’ most vital industries,” Toia said. “The restaurant business currently produces jobs and revenue that support both the state’s economy and culture. As President, I want to plant strong roots that will help pave the path for growth for future restaurant industry leaders.”

The President’s responsibilities also include increasing the membership base, a focal point for Toia, developing strategies to enhance the Association’s profitability, and maintaining the positive relationship the Association has forged with public officials and state and local agencies. His duties will also include diligently monitoring proposed federal, state and local issues affecting the industry.

“My goal is to foster healthy relationships with other community groups and to enrich and continue building on successful and innovative events like the Taste of Chicago and Chicago Gourmet, which is now going into its fifth year. I’m also committed to the IRA’s Educational Foundation, which – in partnership with ProStart – offers high school students practical industry experience combined with textbook learning to begin a successful career path,” Toia added.

Toia’s community involvement includes serving as an Advisory Board Member of the Counseling Center of Lakeview and on the Board of the Kimbark Plaza Co-Op in Hyde Park. He is also the Chairman/Commissioner of Special Service Area 20- Beverly/Morgan Park, Ward 19, as well as Commissioner of Special Service Area 17-Central Lakeview, Ward 44.

He previously served as a Board Member and Affirmative Action/Community Relations Chairman for McPier (McCormick Place Navy Pier), as President/Board Member of the Central Lakeview Merchant Association, and on the Board at the Uptown Learning Center. In 2011, Mayor Emanuel named Toia to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

#### **About the Illinois Restaurant Association**

Founded in 1914, the Illinois Restaurant Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, educating and improving the restaurant industry in Illinois. For more information, visit [www.illinoisrestaurants.org](http://www.illinoisrestaurants.org) or the organization’s [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels.

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