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**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHOOSE CHICAGO ANNOUNCE RECORD SETTING FIRST SIX MONTHS
OF 2017 FOR CHICAGO TOURISM**

*Strong Performance through the First Half of 2017 Poised to Break Tourism Record Set Last Year;
Chicago Welcomed 28 Major Conventions so far in 2017*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and David Whitaker, President and CEO of Choose Chicago, today announced that projected hotel room demand and hotel occupancy continue to grow in the first half of 2017 as Chicago remains a destination for major meetings and conventions as well as leisure travel. Hotel room demand is projected to set records in each of the first six months of 2017 with year-to-date rooms occupied at the end of June projected to be up 4.0 percent. The 4.0 percent increase is fueled by growth in leisure visitors and group/meetings visitors. Hotel occupancy rates for Chicago also grew, now averaging a projected 70.7 percent rooms-occupied for the first six months of 2017. This continuously growing demand for hotel rooms occurred while room supply growth of 3.2% occurred, a result of three additional hotels opening in the first six months of 2017.

“Over the past six years, Chicago’s tourism industry has strengthened our city’s economy, allowing us to show off our world class city to leisure travelers and convention attendees alike,” said Mayor Emanuel. “The record setting hotel performance so far in 2017 is just the latest indication of a strong tourism sector, and we look forward to continuing to break our own records as more visitors choose to work, play and vacation in Chicago.”

Convention travel continues to be a strong force behind the growth in hotel demand and occupancy rates. Of the 28 major conventions that met in Chicago during the first six months of this year, five experienced record attendance figures, five more experienced increased attendance above the previous year, four completely sold-out available exhibit space, and three had record sales in exhibitor space.

June is expected to conclude on a high note as the American Library Association wraps up its annual convention this week. The Association announced convention attendance has exceeded 22,700 – the highest attendance of any host city since they last met in Chicago in 2013. Additionally, the Lions Clubs International is returning to their birthplace for their 100th Lions Clubs International Convention June 30 through July 4. Approximately 30,000 people will attend the convention this week, with nearly 70 percent of the attendees being international visitors from over 130 countries.

“We’re quite encouraged with the record pace of visitor demand overall and the success that our major conventions are experiencing when they convene here,” said David Whitaker, Choose Chicago President and CEO. “We are particularly pleased with the significant growth in leisure visitors, as this increase adds an additional economic impact to so many of our industry partners. These visitors are the ones who return home and become ambassadors as they share their Chicago stories.”

The growth in hotel room demand may be fueling an increase in employment. Based on Illinois Department of Employment Security data, Choose Chicago forecasts that 1,519 new jobs will be added to the leisure and hospitality sector in the first six months of this year.

About Choose Chicago

Choose Chicago® is the official destination marketing organization for Chicago, Illinois. Its mission is to bring regional, national and international business and leisure visitors to Chicago for the economic benefit of the city, the community and its membership. For a comprehensive listing of many of the amazing events and activities awaiting visitors this summer, visit ChooseChicago.Com/WelcomeHome.

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