

# KOA Continues to Advocate for Campgrounds in U.S. and Canada

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*Kampgrounds of America leads continued lobbying efforts to keep campgrounds open and operating during COVID-19 Pandemic*

KOA NEWS SERVICE (Apr. 12, 2021) – Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kampgrounds of America Inc. (KOA) has been working to keep campgrounds open and operating in both the U.S. and Canada. This work is ongoing amidst increasing restrictions in Ontario and in an effort to be proactive for any future set-backs that may occur elsewhere.

“Last year, as states and provinces enacted stay at home orders and mandated campgrounds to close or limit operations, we knew we had to advocate strongly for private campgrounds,” said Toby O’Rourke, KOA president and CEO. “These lobbying efforts proved successful as campgrounds in most states and provinces, in some or all capacities, were allowed to operate as we approached the summer season.”

As KOA, in partnership with ARVC, CCRV and RVIA, began working directly with government officials and agencies, it became clear that there was misunderstanding about private campgrounds, their services and structure, and their importance to the health of their communities. By actively educating policy makers, camping was able to resume across the United States and Canada.

While outlook for camping in 2021 is much more optimistic than this time last year, KOA is still closely monitoring changing restrictions. In Ontario, for example, recently enacted stay at home orders are limiting campgrounds to those who need to shelter or have full season contracts. This disruption to recreational camping, during what should be the start of the season, proves that camping still needs an active advocate.

Late last year, KOA hired two lobbying firms to promote camping and help the brand navigate policy challenges. In the U.S., KOA is working with the firm Faegre Drinker. The primary focus of their work has been to have private campgrounds added to the critical infrastructure list maintained by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). This list provides state governments with guidance on what businesses are essential and is used when determining what can remain open and operating during lockdowns.

Through this work, KOA’s O’Rourke connected with CISA’s Commercial Infrastructure sector and is now an active participant with the group. This will help ensure that private campgrounds have a voice at the table in promoting their importance as an essential business when CISA makes their next update.

“I am highly confident that campgrounds will eventually be a part of the CISA critical infrastructure list,” said O’Rourke. “We’ve made really great progress through a proactive approach that will help us in advance of any set-backs this year or unforeseen situations in the future.”

KOA has also been in direct contact with the National Governor’s Association (NGA) to help share the importance of campgrounds directly with each state’s leadership. A similar partnership with the National Association of Counties (NACo) provides another level of local governmental contacts.

On Capitol Hill, lobbyists from Faegre Drinker continue to work diligently with key Senate and House committee members to elevate awareness of KOA and private campgrounds. These efforts are not only connecting KOA directly to policy makers, but campground owners as well.

“With the help of Faegre Drinker, we are working to set up meetings with over 30 Senators and U.S. Representatives who are on key committees. These meetings will include KOA franchisees from their states or districts,” O’Rourke said. “We’ll have local voices directly discussing policy and the importance of the private campground industry with the nation’s decision makers.”

In Canada, where lockdowns are currently occurring or being discussed once again, KOA is partnering with Crestview Strategy to grant campgrounds the same short-term allowances as hotels, particularly as provinces promote domestic tourism this spring and summer. Throughout the pandemic, hotels have not faced the same restrictions as campgrounds.

This month, KOA has been hosting a series of virtual meetings with several Members of Provincial Parliaments in Ontario in addition to the Ministry of Heritage, Sport Tourism and Culture Industries; the Associate Ministry of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction; and the Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade. Meetings with the Premier’s Office and the Ministry of Health are upcoming as well.

These conversations are helping raise awareness of the private camping industry among critical government officials. Several KOA campground owners have been directly involved in these meetings to share how their parks operate safely and the economic impact they have faced.

While there is immediate need to advocate for Ontario due to their recent return to stay at home orders, KOA continues to actively advocate for camping across all of Canada. With the ongoing border closure placing increased importance on domestic travel in Canada, KOA is helping establish camping as critical infrastructure.

“Our goal is to ensure that our campgrounds across Canada can be fully open this year,” said O’Rourke. “To call last year a challenge in Canada is an understatement. We’re focused on making sure camping can return as strong as ever. We are seeking alignment with hotels so that private campgrounds can fully accept both long and short-term business.”

While KOA has a direct interest in advocating for their over 525 camping locations across the U.S. and Canada, the company also recognizes the importance of advocating for camping as whole.

“Camping helps people connect both to our natural spaces and to those closest to them,” said O’Rourke. “To me, that is essential and an

important cause to champion no matter where people choose to camp.”

***About Kampgrounds of America:***

[Kampgrounds of America](#), Inc. (KOA) is the world's largest system of open-to-the-public campgrounds with 525 locations across the U.S. and Canada united under the mission of “connecting people to the outdoors and each other.” The industry leader in outdoor hospitality, KOA's family of campground brands – KOA Journey, KOA Holiday and KOA Resort – offer sites and amenities designed for every type of camping experience. The company was founded in 1962 in Billings, Mont., and today serves more than a million camping families each year, who rely on the standards of excellence and unique outdoor adventures KOA is known for. For more information, visit [KOA.com](#).