

Darden Restaurants Scores 90 Percent on the Human Rights Campaign 2012 Corporate Equality Index

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Score ranks highest among nine restaurant companies rated

ORLANDO, Fla., Dec. 9, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Darden Restaurants announced today that the company scored 90 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) 2012 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) for its business practices and policies toward its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees, the highest score among nine restaurant companies rated in the report.

"At Darden, we embrace diversity and inclusion as business imperatives that are critical to our success and future growth," said Sylvia Doggett, vice president of Culture and Inclusion for Darden. "We believe that understanding and embracing our differences enriches our corporate culture and enables us to be a stronger organization."

A total of 850 businesses were rated in the 2012 CEI, including 636 companies like Darden that voluntarily participated in the annual survey. The CEI rates companies on 40 specific policies and practices, including having fully-inclusive equal employment opportunity policies, providing equal employment benefits, demonstrating organizational LGBT competency, evidence of their commitment to equality publicly, and exercising responsible citizenship.

The HRC's CEI report recognized Darden for the following policies and practices:

- Including sexual orientation and gender identity in its non-discrimination policies;
- Offering health insurance and at least three other domestic partner benefits;
- Providing diversity training, LGBT employee resource groups and other practices that support LGBT organizational competency; and
- Public engagement with the LGBT community.

Darden's long history of diversity and inclusion dates back to 1938, when company founder Bill Darden welcomed anyone as a guest in his first restaurant during an era of racial segregation and discrimination. Today, diversity remains at the core of Darden's culture. The company's diversity initiatives reflect its guiding principles to attract and retain a workforce that mirrors its diverse customer base, provide opportunities for diverse suppliers, and contribute to the well-being of the communities it serves.

About the Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

About Darden Restaurants

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 1,900 restaurants that generate more than \$7.5 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2011, Darden became the first full-service restaurant company ever to be named to the *FORTUNE* "100 Best Companies to Work For" list. Our restaurant brands — Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52 and Eddie V's — reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit www.darden.com.

SOURCE Darden Restaurants, Inc.: General

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