

**Darden Restaurants Scores 100 Percent on the Human Rights Campaign 2014 Corporate Equality Index**  
**Monday, December 09, 2013 02:30:00 PM (GMT)**

ORLANDO, Fla., Dec. 9, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Darden Restaurants announced today that the company scored 100 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) 2014 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) for its business practices and policies toward its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees. A record 303 businesses achieved the top rating of 100 percent.

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

A total of 934 businesses were rated in the 2014 CEI, including the entire Fortune 500. Companies are rated 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, released each fall since 2002, provides an in-depth analysis and rating of large U.S. employers and their policies and practices pertinent to LGBT employees. It is the premiere national benchmark for LGBT workplace inclusion. Businesses rated 100% are recognized as "Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality." The full report can viewed at: [www.hrc.org/cei](http://www.hrc.org/cei).

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 Darden Restaurants**

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), owns and operates more than 2,100 restaurants that generate over \$8.5 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, Fla., and employing 200,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2013, Darden was named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list for the third year in a row and is the only full-service restaurant company to ever appear on the list. Our restaurant brands – Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52, The Capital Grille, Eddie V's and Yard House – reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. For more information, please visit [www.darden.com](http://www.darden.com).

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**Countries:** United States

**Industries:** Retail, Restaurants

**Languages:** English

**Primary Identifiers:** DRI-US

**Related Identifiers:** DRI-US

**Subjects:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Interest Groups