



20 First Plaza NW, Suite 310  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
505.246.0087 fax: 505.246.0096  
frank@luggagedealers.com

# Press Release

Contact: Frank Fine  
Phone: (505) 246-0087

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 6, 2009

## **MAJOR LUGGAGE DEALER ASSOCIATIONS MERGE**

ALBUQUERQUE NM, JULY 6, 2009: The nation's two major trade associations of luggage and leather goods specialty retailers have agreed to merge. Albuquerque-based American Luggage Dealers Association (ALDA) and Chicago-based National Luggage Dealers Association (NLDA) have reached an agreement under which ALDA members will become members of NLDA as of January 1, 2010. The combined membership will represent over 250 retail locations nationwide that specialize in the sales and service of luggage, travel goods, leather goods and related gifts. The merged association will operate under the NLDA banner and will be headquartered in NLDA's current offices in Chicago.

ALDA Executive Director Frank Fine, who co-chaired the Merger Negotiations Committee said *"This merger presents a great opportunity for the member stores and the buying public. By bringing the majority of better travel goods stores together we can offer the best products and expert travel advice. This will*

~ MORE ~

*enhance the shopper's choices and experience in stores coast-to-coast."*

Both associations have enjoyed long, successful histories. NLDA was established in 1925 and ALDA was founded in 1970. Member stores of both associations are known for providing high quality merchandise and professional customer service with extra attention to individual needs. Many stores are staffed with travel goods specialists certified by the Travel Goods Association. They are trained to provide comprehensive, up-to-date information on travel security, procedures and destinations as well as all the latest travel and business accessories that help make travel and work life more enjoyable.

Informal discussions about merging the two associations have occurred over many years. The two associations have had similar missions, and their strategies have focused on marketing and merchandise programs and trade shows for their members.

NLDA produces the Summer Luggage, Gifts and Travel Goods Show held annually the last week of June at Chicago's Navy Pier. Prior to 2004 ALDA had been producing its own show in July. In 2004 ALDA entered into a joint presentation agreement with NLDA to combine summer shows and has been participating in the NLDA Summer Show for the past six years.

NLDA and ALDA marketing programs are both focused on the production of various flyers and catalogs for distribution to

consumers during the spring selling season and the holiday season. Publications are customized for each member store. They are distributed by mail or newspaper insertion in the member's local market. ALDA will produce a final series of holiday flyers for the fourth quarter 2009 prior to completion of the merger.

Both Associations have active direct import programs providing private label brand merchandise for their members. NLDA markets under the Dilana™, Mosaic™, Dorado™, Santa Fe™, ProLite™ Express Scan™, Easy Go™, and Vantaggio™ labels. ALDA brands include Passage2®, Road Warrior®, Firenze, Quick Scan™. The merged merchandise program will consolidate styles but continue to include all current brands.

Other programs offered to its members by ALDA will be carried over to NLDA. They include a robust web-based information and merchandise trading system and a gift card program.

Upon hearing that the merger plan had been approved, ALDA member and officer Chuck Weisbart of It's...In The Bag!, Palm Desert CA, said: *"In an industry that has seen more change in product, traveler restrictions, and approach to travel since 9/11/2001 than any other, it is refreshing to see two groups of specialty travel retailers unite to create a unified balance for the end consumer in the topsy turvy travel arena."*

Pete Paradise of Paradise Pen Company, an NLDA member and former ALDA President said: *"This merger allows for independent luggage*

*retailers to band together to better serve the traveling consumer. Today's travel regulations are changing constantly and the specialty luggage retailer is most qualified to answer questions related to travel gear and to provide the needed necessities to make travel safe and comfortable."*

Formal merger negotiations began in February by a small committee from each association. NLDA was represented by its President, Jeff Izenson, Specialty Luggage, Pittsburgh PA, Vice President John Mori, Mori Luggage & Gifts, Atlanta, GA, and Executive Director Marilyn Murray. ALDA's team included former President Jay Friedman, Lazar's Luggage & Gifts, Sherman Oaks, CA, former President Tim Bleish, Bag and Baggage, Prairie Village, KS, and Executive Director Frank Fine. Several other members of each association participated in sub-committees formed to create plans for the integration of specific programs.

Friedman comments *"I am very excited about the merger of ALDA & NLDA. I know that one strong unified trade association for independent luggage retailers will be much stronger than two smaller groups. Our economies of scale will vastly improve in our direct import programs and our negotiations with the Vendors will be more productive. I look forward to working with the future board of directors of the combined group and to helping continue to build and strengthen our trade association. 2010 will be a better year for all of us!"*

Additional information about the associations can be found on their respective web sites [www.luggagedealers.com](http://www.luggagedealers.com) and [www.nlda.com](http://www.nlda.com), or contact Frank Fine, [frank@luggagedealers.com](mailto:frank@luggagedealers.com), 505-246-0087, or Marilyn Murray, [Marilyn@nlda.com](mailto:Marilyn@nlda.com), 847-998-9596.

-End-