



Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) was recognized during the Flagler Awards ceremony on September 6 as part of 2023 Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Rosen Shingle Creek, Orlando. Pictured here is Dana Young, CEO of Visit Florida (far left) and Jennifer Rominiecki, Chair of Visit Florida (far right), with members of Visit Tampa Bay. Left to right: Stefanie Zinke, JoLynn Lokey, Santiago C. Corrada, Patrick Harrison, Mary Haban, Vanessa Evans, and Janette Carter.

California Repeals Travel Ban on States with Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws *Repeal Bill Creates Anti-Discrimination Media Campaign*

By Jonathan Trager

California has repealed its ban on government-sponsored travel to states that enact laws that discriminate on the basis of sexuality or gender, with lawmakers arguing the state boycott enacted in 2016 has been ineffective.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on September 13 signed the legislation to repeal the ban. The state Assembly voted 64-12 in favor of the repeal on September 11, and the state Senate voted 31-6 in favor on September 12.

The bill also authorizes a state-funded media campaign to combat discrimination in states with anti-LGBTQ+ laws.

"In the face of a rising tide of anti-LGBTQ+ hate, this measure helps California's message of acceptance, equality, and hope reach the places where it is most needed," Newsom said

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Scott Beck Tapped to Lead San Francisco Travel Association

By Jonathan Trager

Destination Toronto President & CEO Scott Beck has been appointed President & CEO of the San Francisco Travel Association, the organization announced on September 8.

Beck will join San Francisco Travel on October 30. He succeeds Joe D'Alessandro, who'll retire in December after nearly 18 years at the helm.

"San Francisco is one of the mar-

quee cities of the world for U.S. and international travelers, and I am thrilled to be joining the team at San Francisco Travel to continue to showcase everything it has to offer," Beck said. "A strong tourism industry is vital to the city's economy, local businesses and neighborhoods, and I am passionately committed to helping steward San Francisco's ongoing tourism recovery."

Beck joined Destination Toronto in 2019 to lead the sales and marketing

efforts for Canada's most visited destination and North America's fourth-largest city. Before joining Destination Toronto, he headed up Visit Salt Lake for 14 years.

Beck, who was named a "Utah Business CEO of the Year" in 2018, also has extensive experience in the hotel industry, which includes serving as general manager of the Marriott City Center in Salt Lake City; task force

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MGM Resorts Suffers Cyber Attack

By Jordan Bradley

MGM Resorts International suffered a breach in its cybersecurity systems that impacted a portion of its systems on September 10.

The hotel and casino company announced the breach on its X profile—the social media platform formerly known as Twitter—on September 11, though the full extent of the breach is still unknown at press deadline.

"Promptly after detecting the issue, we quickly began an investigation with

assistance from leading external cybersecurity experts," the company's initial statement said. "We also notified law enforcement and took prompt action to protect our systems and data, including shutting down certain systems."

A spokesperson for the Federal Bureau of Investigations told *Forbes* via email that the agency is aware of the incident and that, because it is ongoing, "we do not have any additional information to provide at this time."

Though MGM did not
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NCBMP Hosting State of Black Tourism Event

By Todd McElwee

Addressing the intersectionality of Black culture and Black tourism, the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP) is hosting the 11th Annual State of Black Tourism event on September 21 at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. NCBMP is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2023.

"Our Founders were all association executives, who chose to leverage their \$129 billion economic power to advance and recognize

Black meeting planners and suppliers' industry wide," said Jason Dunn, Executive Director, NCBMP. "Our very existence as an organization was created in the spirit of advocacy with the knowledge of our economic impact on a destination or hotel brand."

During the event, attendees can expect an engaging discussion and networking opportunities with industry leaders and innovators, including NAACP CEO Derrick Johnson. NCBMP said learning outcomes will include the impact of Black tourism

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NEWS

U.S. Travel, Airline Associations Applaud Long-Awaited FAA Administrator Nomination

By Julia Stumbaugh

After months of advocacy from travel industry associations, the Biden administration nominated a candidate to lead the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) after the permanent position stood vacant for more than 500 days.

The White House announced on September 7 the nomination of Michael G. Whitaker as FAA Administrator.

The U.S. Travel Association, Airlines for America (A4A), Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), National Business Aviation Association (NBAA), Regional Airline Association (RAA), General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), Helicopter Association International (HAI), American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), and National Air Carrier Association (NACA) praised Whitaker's nomination.

Whitaker served as Deputy Administrator for the FAA from 2013 to 2016 and currently works as COO of Supernal, a Hyundai subsidiary developing electric air vehicles. He previously



Michael Whitaker

worked with United Airlines and the holding company for IndiGo, India's largest airline.

Representatives of several associations, including AIA and NBAA, vouched for Whitaker's experience with industry subjects including modernization of air traffic systems, emerging technologies and aviation

safety.

James Viola, former director of general aviation safety assurance for the FAA leader and current President and CEO of HAI, said he "worked closely" with Whitaker at the FAA and is "confident he is the right person to lead the agency." Pete Bunce, President and CEO, GAMA, vouched that his association worked with Whitaker in his previous FAA role.

Nicholas E. Calio, President and CEO, A4A, said Whitaker's "extensive experience" gave him "a deep understanding of and appreciation for the collaborative partnership between industry and government."

The FAA has not had a permanent administrator since former Delta Air Lines executive Stephen Dickson stepped down in March 2022.

Since then, the FAA has operated under a series of temporary acting administrators. The Biden administration nominated Denver International Airport CEO Phillip A. Washington earlier this year, but Washington withdrew from consideration in March after Senate criticism of his aviation experience and involvement in a corruption

investigation.

Both Tori Emerson Barnes, U.S. Travel Association Executive Vice President of Public Affairs and Policy, and Todd Hauptli, President and CEO, AAAE, called the nomination of a permanent FAA leader "long overdue."

"While this position has remained vacant, aviation policymaking has largely remained at a standstill," Emerson Barnes said. "The U.S. Senate must work quickly to confirm an administrator and extend vital FAA program." Once Whitaker is approved by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and the full Senate, associations hope work with the FAA on initiatives they say stagnated under temporary leadership.

Faye Malarkey Black, CEO, RAA, said the regional airline group wants to work with Whitaker on evolving risk management systems and improving training standards for pilots.

George Novak, President and CEO, NACA, said the air carriers' association hopes Whitaker will immediately address air traffic control (ATC) system modernization, ATC staffing levels and a recent increase in runway incidents.

BestCities Adds Washington, D.C., to Global Alliance

By Jonathan Trager

BestCities Global Alliance has welcomed Washington, D.C., as the 13th destination in its global network of business events destinations.

BestCities is "committed to collaboration and supporting meetings that create a lasting impact in a host destination." The U.S. capital completed a stringent vetting process to join the alliance, including a detailed site inspection and tour of the city.

"We are excited to welcome Washington, DC to the BestCities Global Alliance. Their presence strengthens the list of quality destinations within our network," said Dr. Edward Koh, Chair of BestCities Global Alliance Board. "This partnership reinforces BestCities standing as a global alliance, enriching the options available to our association clients seeking world-class host destinations."

Elliott Ferguson, President & CEO of Destination DC, said the city's part-

nership with BestCities Global Alliance "marks a pivotal moment in our city's ability to attract global meetings and events."

"By joining forces with the BestCities network, we're embracing opportunities to share insights, drive positive change, and collectively shape the future of impactful events," said Ferguson. "The partnership reinforces Washington, DC's status as a thriving hub of culture, diversity, and innovation, dedicated to creating lasting

legacies that transcend borders and inspire communities."

BestCities pointed out that D.C. is home to many event centers such as the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts; iconic attractions; restaurants that include 24 Michelin-starred establishments; as well as more than 33,000 hotel rooms.

For more information about BestCities Global Alliance, visit bestcities.net.

Power of Partnership Stewardship Summit Debuting Next Month in Richmond

By Todd McElwee

The Power of Partnership Stewardship Summit (POPS) is launching from October 15-18 at the Richmond Marriott. Dedicated to exploring the intersections of culture, climate, and community in travel and tourism, the Virginia event is being produced by Tourism Cares, Cultural Heritage Economic Alliance, The Travel Foundation and U.S. Cultural & Heritage Marketing Council.

"As travel and tourism continue to take shape post-pandemic, there's

a need to radically change how the industry manages its stewardship of destinations and better engage the residents who live there," said Stephanie M. Jones, Founder & CEO, Cultural Heritage Economic Alliance, and Blacks in Travel & Tourism. "The primary goal of POPS is to generate action and partnerships, calling for industry transformation."

Presented in partnership with Allianz Partners, Delta Air Lines and Expedia Group, the summit program will feature speakers discussing topics and trends shaping the tourism space.

The agenda will look at economic development in underrepresented communities, climate matters, cultural tourism and more.

On October 18, attendees will have the opportunity to explore the Richmond by experiencing the culture, various neighborhoods and changemakers through impact tours and volunteer activities. Experience Day happenings range from the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia to a tour of the Mending Walls, a collaborative, community-engaged art installation that aims to advance

social justice.

"The Summit's Experience Day creates an opportunity to bring a diverse group of industry stakeholders together to participate in meaningful travel experiences, connecting guests with the city of Richmond in a deeper way," said Greg Takehara, CEO, Tourism Cares. "By stepping outside the conference walls and connecting with local changemakers, our goal is that participants will engage with these organizations and integrate them into future travel experiences."

Find more information [here](https://bestcities.net).

HOTS

HOTS Burn Benedict Burn... The coastal city of New London in Connecticut was nearly burnt to the ground in 1781 after Benedict Arnold, previously an American general in the Revolution, led British forces to attack his hometown. New London is now getting its revenge 242 years later. Several hundred celebrants took to the streets on September 9 to cheer as an effigy of the traitor was set ablaze during the annual Burning of Benedict Arnold Festival. "I like to jokingly refer to it as the original Burning Man festival," organizer Derron Wood told the Associated Press. HOTS takes notes to

never offend the people of Connecticut, lest we live up to our name with a blazing festival of our own.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱

HOTS A River Runs Through It... Residents of a small town in Portugal were shocked to discover one of their roadways transformed into a river of red wine on September 10, NPR reported. Roughly 581,000 gallons of red wine from the local winery, Destilaria Levira flooded several streets in Sao Lourenco do Bairro, Portugal, and causing significant disruption to the town. No one was injured in the incident, and winery officials are unsure what caused the rupture to the structure that had previously been storing the wine. Cleanup has begun throughout the city. HOTS is a little forlorn at all the lost vino.



During the Accor #connectWithUs Annual Sales Blitz 2023, Fairmont Washington, D.C., Georgetown welcomed clients to Taco Tuesday in the hotel's courtyard on September 12. Left to right: Mark Huntley, General Manager and Regional Vice President, Fairmont; Jason Rowley, Executive Sous Chef, Fairmont; Jennifer Erney, Executive Director, Global Sales, Meetings & Incentives and Industry Relations, Accor; and Jordi Gallardo, Executive Chef, Fairmont.

Tourism Diversity Matters Announces *The Collective Experience Agenda*

By Todd McElwee

Jonathan D. Lovitz, Director of Public Affairs & Sr. Advisor, U.S. Department of Commerce; and Steve Pemberton, Chief People Officer, Workhuman, will provide the opening and closing keynote addresses at Tourism Diversity Matters' (TDM) *The Collective Experience: 2023 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Conference*. The Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing will host from October 23-24.

TDM said Lovitz is a nationally recognized DEI advocate and Pemberton is a best-selling author, executive and philanthropist.

"We're thrilled to announce our keynotes for The Collective Experience. As one of the nation's top young leaders and economic development experts, Jonathan D. Lovitz understands first-hand how equity is the strongest driver of a modern economy," said Greg DeShields, Executive Director, TDM. "He will undoubtedly reignite your passion and commitment toward

investing in DEI."

"Steve Pemberton's story of perseverance and creating opportunities for others could not be more fitting to close our DEI conference," added DeShields. "Steve was the first person in Walgreen's 100-plus year history to hold the position of Chief Diversity Officer. His experience rising above obstacles to become a trailblazing corporate executive, diversity leader and relentless champion for others, will most certainly captivate attendees at our closing keynote."

TDM said the conference will gather leaders across the corporate, nonprofit, government and academic sectors to exchange insights and concepts about diversity, equity and inclusion best practices.

Among those joining the keynotes in presenting will be Carsten Beck, Director & Futurist, Copenhagen In-

stitute for Future Studies, as well as leaders from Amtrack, PHL Diversity and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, San Diego State University, University of Houston and Virginia State University, the Axelrod Firm, Autism Travel Club, Ebony Expats, and more.

New this year is the inaugural Tourism Diversity Matters Diversity & Inclusion Awards Dinner on October 23. The event,

sponsored by Meet Boston, will honor the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Meet Boston President & CEO, Martha Sheridan will host a Fireside Chat featuring Leon W. Russell, Chair of the NAACP National Board of Directors, and Geoff Freeman, President & CEO of the U.S. Travel Association.

Find more information about the event [here](#).

**"Jonathan D. Lovitz
understands first-hand how
equity is the strongest
driver of a modern economy."**

NCBMP

continued from page 1

on local economies, the preservation of cultural heritage, and strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion within organizations.

"We believe that Black Culture is a powerful driver of Tourism and can positively impact both individuals and communities," said Johnson. "The State of Black Tourism Think Tank

will speak to the immense economic growth potential and social impact within this industry while highlighting the ways in which we can drive positive change so that it is sustainable."

Registration and a continental Breakfast opens at 8:30 a.m. with the program commencing half-an-hour later.

"We understand the importance of standing for fundamental freedoms and supporting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from all levels and we will

continue to push for positive change," said Dunn. "We also understand the power and influence of tourism to any economy, especially destinations, communities, and partners that we consider friends. It is my aim to have a thoughtful conversation with President Johnson and gain insight on how Black culture intersects with Black Tourism."

For more information on the 11th Annual State of Black Tourism and NCBMP, [click here](#).

WEEKLY NEWS
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NEWS

Collective Association Asks Congress for Say in NIL Legislation Debate

By Julia Stumbaugh

Congress is considering first-of-its-kind legislation regulating name, image and likeness (NIL) compensation deals for college athletes, and the trade association representing NIL collectives wants a seat at the table.

The Collective Association (TCA) “strongly recommends its inclusion” in discussions of NIL legislation, the association said September 7 in an open letter to Congress.

The TCA was formed in July to represent NIL collectives, groups that coordinate and pool funding for NIL marketing opportunities offered to a college or university’s student-athletes. These groups are partnered, but

not officially affiliated, with schools.

The trade association described itself to Congress as a “voice for student athletes,” which “has been missing since NIL took effect.”

“Recent draft legislation are examples of this misguided exclusion, and we are committed to bringing student-athletes’ interests to the table,” TCA wrote. “As an organization of collectives that work closely with student-athletes and have firsthand knowledge of how NIL is working, favorably and unfavorably, we are the most effective resource.”

The TCA continued: “There are several bills circulating with a lot of good ideas and other aspects we would advise revising, and we welcome the

opportunity to provide our insights as the connectors between the many parties invested in the future of NIL in college athletics.”

The association’s letter came days after the publication by On3, a sports digital media company, of a draft bill from Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Florida), which proposed new regulations of NIL agreements and NIL collectives.

This draft of the Fairness, Accountability, and Integrity in Representation (FAIR) College Sports Act proposed establishing a U.S. Intercollegiate Athletics Commission (USIAC) to oversee NIL deals.

Under the draft bill, collectives would have to register with USIAC and provide the commission with a copy of

any new NIL agreement within 30 days under threat of perjury.

One leader of a collective described this draft legislation to On3 as “purely an anti-collective bill.”

The NIL market opened after the Supreme Court decided in June 2021 that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) cannot completely ban student-athletes from receiving compensation.

Since then, the NCAA has passed interim NIL rules, while at least 32 states have passed NIL laws, but no permanent national NIL standards have been set.

Congress is currently considering

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Hilton to Install 20,000 Tesla Chargers Across 2,000 Hotels

By Jordan Bradley

In an expanded agreement with Tesla, Hilton Hotels will install up to 20,000 Tesla electric vehicle chargers at 2,000 of its hotels, creating the largest network of overnight EV charging stations within the hospitality industry.

“At Hilton, we are committed to meeting the changing needs of our guests who are looking for hotel experiences that complement their daily routines while offering exceptional hospitality,” said Matt Schuyler, Chief Brand Officer for Hilton.

The installation will begin early next year, the hotel company said in its September 7 announcement. Each of the 2,000 selected Hilton hotels located throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico will receive at least six chargers. The chargers themselves

will be Tesla’s new Universal Wall Connectors, which were launched mid-August this year, and can be used to charge any North American electric vehicle model.

“Through this expanded agreement with Tesla, we are significantly changing the landscape of universal EV chargers in North America in an incredibly short amount of time,” Schuyler said.

With a significant portion of Hilton hotels populating heavily frequented roadways and the increase of electric vehicle users (more than two million electric cars are currently on the road according to a February study released

by Simply Insurance), the expanded partnership benefits not only Hilton and Tesla, but their customers, the hotel company said.

For Tesla, a main brand priority is improving on the experience of owning



Hilton and Tesla announced they will install up to 20,000 Tesla universal wall chargers for electric vehicles at up to 2,000 Hilton hotels.

and driving traditional gasoline-powered vehicles.

“To ensure electric vehicle adoption at scale, our joint industry goal

must be to vastly improve upon the traditional gasoline vehicle ownership experience, not just meet it,” said Rebecca Tinucci, Sr. Director of Infrastructure for Tesla. “Installing infrastructure at popular destinations, like Hilton hotels, enables EV owners to charge where they park, meaning no unnecessary refueling stops along their journey.”

Based on 2023 web data across their portfolio, the hotel company discovered that travelers are increasingly searching for EV charging stations when they look to book a stay at a Hilton hotel. The addition of an EV charging station search feature on Hilton’s website became the second-highest feature to convert web searches into stays at Hilton hotels, the company said.

“We applaud Hilton for their leadership in the space and look forward to continuing to ramp this critical program with other industry leaders,” Tinucci said.

“Each of the 2,000 selected Hilton hotels located throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico will receive at least six chargers.”

Las Vegas Hospitality Workers Considering Strike

By Jordan Bradley

Las Vegas hospitality unions announced they will vote to authorize a strike on September 26 if a tentative agreement cannot be reached with three major employers on the Las Vegas Strip before the vote.

Despite multiple rounds of contract negotiations between employers—including Strip heavyweights MGM Resorts International, Caesars Entertainment and Wynn Resorts—and the

Culinary Local 226 and Bartenders Local 165 unions over several months, the group has yet to come to terms on a five-year contract.

The two unions represent more than 53,000 hospitality workers in Las Vegas—a majority of whom work on the Strip or in downtown Las Vegas—whose contracts original contracts expired on June 1. Las Vegas properties have been operating under extensions ever since.

In a statement released on September

7, the Culinary Union said despite its forthcoming vote to authorize a strike, it is still negotiating in good faith.

“We are negotiating for the best contract ever in the Culinary Union’s history to ensure that one job is enough. Companies are generating record profits and we demand that workers aren’t left behind and have a fair share of that success,” said Ted Pappageorge, Secretary-Treasurer for the Culinary Union.

Hospitality workers are seeking wage increases, lowered housekeeping quotas and mandated daily room cleanings, and better on-the-job safety protocols, among other demands.

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NEWS

Historic Hotel Completes Renovation to Honor Its Railway History

By Jordan Bradley

Train enthusiasts looking for a unique hotel stay that honors a portion of America's railway history need look no further than the newly renovated Hotel Chalet at The Choo Choo in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The newly renovated hotel is offering stays in restored 1920s and 1960s train carriages, a nod and an ode to the hotel's early history as a major rail hub for both passenger and industrial service. The station was built by the Southern Railway System and opened in the late 1800s, according to the Tennessee River Valley Geo Tourism organization, before its high volume of traffic made expansion necessary.

In 1906, Southern Railway System began construction on a second terminal for passenger train cars called Terminal Station. By August 1970, Terminal Station saw its last train depart the station. The station was almost demolished in 1973, but it was saved from destruction and transformed into the Chattanooga Choo Choo Hilton and Entertainment Complex. By the following year, Terminal Station

was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Now freshly renovated, restored and equipped with a new name to welcome a new generation of guests, The Hotel Chalet has 127 guest rooms, 25 of which are situated within restored Pullman carriages from the 1920s and 1960s. The renovation throughout the hotel's property took two years and \$19 million to complete.

"I drew inspiration from the heritage of U.S. Railways, which often constructed lodges and chalets to encourage travel and exploration," said Jake Lamstein, the chalet's owner, in an interview with *Travel + Leisure*. "It reflects the spirit of rail travel by inviting guests to embark on a journey, not just to their destination, but also through time. That spirit of adventure and elegance permeates every aspect of the hotel's design and guest experience."

The Hotel Chalet is a member of the Historic Hotels of America and its recent renovations draw style inspiration from the Victorian and Mid-Century eras of style. The designer behind the renovation, Jenny Bukevov, was thorough in her details, insuring that



The Hotel Chalet at The Choo Choo in Chattanooga, Tennessee opens after an extensive two-year renovation October 31.

the design aesthetic of each car reflected the era from whence it came. While the other non-train car accommodations take inspiration from the surrounding Appalachian Mountains.

"The hotel encapsulates the nostalgia and allure of rail travel's heyday,

making it an ideal destination for history enthusiasts and anyone seeking a memorable and immersive experience in the heart of Chattanooga's Southside," Lamstein said.

The Hotel Chalet opens on October 31 and is accepting bookings now.

National Retail Federation Expands with Acquisition of Reverse Logistics Association

By Julia Stumbaugh

The National Retail Federation (NRF) expanded its reach over the retail industry by adding the Reverse Logistics Association (RLA), the global trade association setting best practices for the logistics of returns.

The acquisition was announced on September 7 during the RLA Leadership Summit at the Georgia Tech Hotel & Conference Center in Atlanta.

The NRF described the acquisition of RLA as a step toward turning the retail industry into a "circular economy" by ensuring that gently-used but "useful" retail goods are reused or recycled instead of trashed.

"As consumer demand for sustainable offerings continues to increase, RLA's reverse logistics expertise will help our members to 'close the loop' and accelerate the emergence of the

circular economy," said Matthew Shay, President and CEO, NRF.

"Through this partnership, RLA will continue to reach industries investing in the circular economy and enhance NRF's long-term commitment to retail's supply chain and sustainability efforts," said Tony Sciarrotta, Executive Director of RLA.

RLA will now become a division of NRF, an NRF spokesperson told WWD.

"RLA members will continue to access RLA services through rla.org and other current RLA portals and programs," the NRF spokesperson said. "Moving forward, RLA programs will be marketed to NRF members, where appropriate."

NRF Vice President of CSR and Sustainability Scot Case told *Logistics Management* that RLA joining the NRF was a "logical step" after a "longstanding history of collaboration" between

the two groups.

"As sustainability and circularity have become more important for both consumers and retailers, NRF members will continue to receive the most forward-thinking innovations, research and information to support their long-term sustainability and supply chain initiatives," Case said.

RLA was founded in 2002 to oversee the "aftermarket supply chain," now referred to as "reverse logistics." This industry has grown rapidly over the past two decades as the advent of online shopping coincided with a precipitous rise in returns.

Returns made up approximately 17% of retail sales in 2022. They accounted for \$816 billion in annual losses for U.S. retailers and represented a "significant factor" in the size of retail companies' carbon footprints, according to NRF.

The NRF, however, has been working to reframe returns for its members as an opportunity for more than just economic loss and environmental damage.

"A shift in mindset can present opportunities to decrease return rates and loss by leveraging data, increasing communication with manufacturers and thinking about sustainability," David Johnston, Vice President of Asset Protection and Retail Operations, NRF, told members in March.

By overseeing the industry that repairs, refurbishes and repackages used products in order to resell, reuse or recycle goods, RLA could help provide NRF members with the mindset shift Johnston described.

There will be no immediate changes to RLA membership, the NRF spokesperson told WWD. The RLA and NRF already share several major members, including Target and Kroger.

Legislation

continued from page 4

multiple pieces of pending legislation regarding NIL deals. Those include a pending bill from Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) that would give NCAA power

over NIL standards and clarify that student-athletes are not employees.

Cruz's bill clashes with a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) complaint issued in May in California, which alleges NCAA and member conferences and universities are misclassifying student-athletes by not

designating them as employees.

The TCA likely hopes to convince Congress to oppose NLRB's complaint. If student-athletes are classified as employees, they could unionize and collectively bargain directly with schools and conferences, calling the association's role in the NIL market

into question.

The TCA currently represents 21 collectives. Over the past month, the association expanded to include four new collectives affiliated with Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, West Virginia and North Carolina State.

NEWS

Jeopardy! Host Mayim Bialik Speaking at Convening Leaders

By Todd McElwee

Answer: This *Jeopardy!* host and television star will speak at PCMA's Convening Leaders in San Diego. Question: Who is Mayim Bialik?

Providing the closing keynote, Bialik, also a neuroscientist and author, will combine her academic knowledge and experience to dispel the myths and stigma surrounding mental health.

Convening Leaders will be held January 7–10 at the San Diego Convention Center.

"Join us at Convening Leaders 2024 to THINK BIGGER about how your personal wellness fits into (and increases!) your professional fulfillment," PCMA said when announcing Bialik.

Bialik starred on the hit CBS comedy *The Big Bang Theory* as Amy Farrah Fowler, for which she received two Critics Choice Awards, four Emmy Award nominations, and a SAG Award nomination. In the 1990s, she was the titular character in NBC's *Blossom*. She also appeared in *Beaches* and currently stars and serves co-executive producer of Fox's *Call Me Kat*.

Earning a PhD in neuroscience from UCLA in 2000, Bialik also engaged in



Mayim Bialik

Hebrew & Jewish studies while in Westwood. She's written two number one *New York Times* bestsellers and the recently released *Boying Up: How to Be Brave, Bold and Brilliant*. PCMA said her podcast, *Mayim Bialik's Breakdown*, addresses mental health and busts myths and misunderstandings.

Find more information on Convening Leaders [here](#).

Maine Medical Association Endorses Universal Healthcare

By Julia Stumbaugh

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) has become the fifth state medical association to endorse universal healthcare insurance coverage.

The association voted the weekend of September 10 to endorse a policy statement calling for universal federal healthcare, the *Maine Monitor* reported.

This coverage should be provided through either a single-payer system where all healthcare costs are publicly covered, or "a combination of private and public financing" over which the government holds regulatory powers, according to MMA's policy statement.

The Maine physicians' association joins Washington, New Hampshire, Vermont and Hawaii as the only state medical societies to endorse universal health care, according to Physicians for a National Health Program.

"While we are among a small number of medical associations to do this, we think our actions represent a growing consensus of physicians, both in Maine and nationally, that it's time for every American to have healthcare insurance and to figure out how to do

that in a way that's affordable and equitable," said Dr. Erik Steele, immediate past president, MMA, according to the *Maine Monitor*.

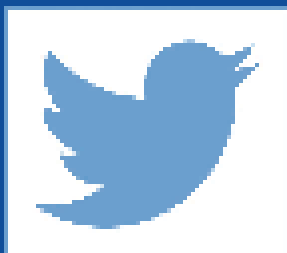
The MMA said high costs of healthcare exacerbated by private insurance inhibit relationships between doctors and patients and lead to physician burnout.

Other state associations opposed to universal healthcare, such as the Florida Medical Association (FMA), have argued that allowing the government control of the healthcare system would lead to unfair market concentration, as well as lower physician payment rates than offered under commercial plans.

The American Medical Association (AMA), the country's largest trade group for physicians, has opposed single-payer healthcare as a policy position for decades, but it has recently showed signs of wavering on that stance.

The AMA House of Delegates came just 38 votes short of overturning the association's official standard opposing single-payer healthcare in 2019, according to the *New Yorker*.

Robert Doherty, MD, Sr. Vice Pres-
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NEWS

LGBT Meeting Professionals Association Announces Move, New Executive Director

By Julia Stumbaugh

The headquarters of the LGBT Meeting Professionals Association (LGBT MPA) have moved from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Alexandria, Virginia, the association announced on September 12.

LGBT MPA also announced the hiring of Cameron Curtis, CMM, CAE, founder and Chief Innovator of C2 Association Strategies, as the association's new Executive Director. Curtis began her role on September 6.

The LGBT MPA was founded in 2016 to support the professional advancement of LGBT meeting professionals.

"We have a strong membership base in the DMV area, and this move to Old Town Alexandria, VA, will give us a new opportunity to have more interaction with our members and our supplier partners," Kyle Jordan, CAE, Chair, LGBT MPA and Director of Meetings, The Institute for Opera-

tions Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS), told *USAE*. "Our new location will also give us the ability to experiment with new program offerings which will benefit our members and the wider meetings and events industry."

LGBT MPA additionally hired Curtis' association management company to guide the association going forward, also effective September 6. C2 Association Strategies is also based in Alexandria.

"Cameron has extensive executive level association leadership experience and comes from a meetings background which made her and C2 an obvious choice for our new management team," Jordan said. "Cameron and her team will bring an elevated level of support which will be great for our members and supplier partners."

Prior to founding C2 Association Strategies, Curtis previously worked as president and CEO of MedEvac



Cameron Curtis

Foundation International and the Association of Air Medical Services. Through SmithBucklin, another as-

sociation management company, Curtis also previously served as executive director for the Society of Interventional Oncology and the Association for Clinical and Translational Science.

"Creating inclusive cultures and allowing everyone to be their authentic self by putting people first is one of our core values at C2 Association Strategies, so the partnership with the LGBT Meeting Professionals Association made perfect sense," Curtis told *USAE*. "We are excited to collaborate and innovate together with the LGBT MPA board, members, and valued supporters to help further their mission and strategic goals."

There will be no other immediate changes to LGBT MPA's leadership structure, but Jordan said the addition of Curtis and partnership with C2 Association Strategies will allow the LGBT MPA Board of Directors to focus on "growth of the association."

EIC Set to Announce Hall of Leaders Honorees This Week *Celebration Is Less Than One Month Away*

By Todd McElwee

The Events Industry Council's (EIC) Global Awards Celebration, during which the Hall of Leaders honorees will be recognized is October 16 at the Bellagio Las Vegas. But who the recipients and the other award winners will be remained a mystery of as

September 14.

The previous day, *USAE* asked EIC when an announcement would be made and if those set to be recognized had been notified of their honors. Mindy Noonan, Sr. Vice President, Communications, responded that the awards would be announced next week (September 17–24) "both to the

individual honorees and to the public."

On July 18, EIC opened the call for awards nominations. In addition to the HOL, the Pacesetter, EIC Social Impact and EIC Adaptation and Innovation Award programs were opened. All nominations were to be submitted through the organization's digital portal and completed by 11:55 pm (EDT) on August 11.

This year's announcement timetable is the tightest of recent vintage. In 2022, EIC announced its award winners on September 2, with the celebration on October 10. The previous year's release came on February 11 for a March 25 virtual celebration.

The gala's date annually corresponds with IMEX America. The HOL contains 150 industry luminaries.

Cyber Attack

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specify the extent of the impact on its resort operations, reports from guests indicated that hotel room keys were malfunctioning, leaving them unable to access their rooms or charge goods and services to their accounts leading hotels to eventually distribute physical room keys; restaurants at the MGM Grand Las Vegas were only able to accept cash, according to a guest who spoke with CNN; guests were unable to use ATMs and slot machines as well, according to guest accounts on social media.

MGM Resorts is comprised of several properties in Las Vegas, including the Aria, Bellagio, Cosmopolitan, Delano Las Vegas, Excalibur, Luxor, Mandalay Bay, MGM Grand Las Vegas and New York-New York properties; and properties in Massachusetts,

Michigan, Mississippi, Maryland, Ohio, New Jersey and New York.

In an update later in the evening of September 11, MGM said that dining, entertainment and gaming operations at its resorts were operational "and continue to deliver the experiences for which MGM is known."

However, "Keys don't even work properly," wrote one X user in response to MGM's update. "Tv [sic] is now not working. It's pretty crazy..."

This breach marks the second for MGM in four years, according to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. In the summer of 2019, the news outlet reported, MGM's cloud server was hacked and some guests' driver's license and passport information had been stolen.

As of September 13, MGM's website was still nonfunctional, only displaying an apology message and list of numbers for guests to contact if they were in need of assistance.

Beck

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Scott Beck

general manager for Ocean Properties Ltd.'s Atlific Hotels; general manager of Sedona Resort Management's Cedar Breaks Lodge in Brian Head, Utah; and director of sales and marketing for Sundance Resort in Provo, Utah.

"With more than 35 years of experience in the convention and tourism industry, Scott brings a wealth of knowledge to this role and proven expertise in attracting events, meetings, and international and domestic visitors to destinations," said Randy Reynoso, Chair of San Francisco Travel. "This is critically important given the diverse leisure and business travel markets that fuel San Francisco's tourism industry as well as our local economy."

Terry Lewis, Chair of San Francisco Travel's CEO search committee, said the committee had conducted a rigorous international search to fill the position and Beck is "a proven destination sales and marketing leader and will be a strong champion for San Francisco."

NEWS

Sioux Center, Iowa, to Vote on Increase in Hotel Tax

By Jordan Bradley

The city of Sioux Center, Iowa, will take a public vote on November 7 to decide on a proposed increase to the community's hotel/motel tax.

Sioux Center currently collects a 5% tax, approved by the community in 2010, on all hotel or motel stays in the city. At an August 21 Sioux Center City Council meeting, council members discussed increasing the tax to 7%, which is the maximum tax a city in Iowa can legally collect.

"We've have had conversations

with hotel property owners; they are supportive. They're seeing the benefit of a lot of visitors that come to our community for the various events and activities in our community," said Scott Wynja, Sioux Center's City Manager, at the council meeting.

The existing 5% hotel/motel tax generates around \$150,000 to \$175,000 annually for the city, according to the *Sioux Center News*. If the city's voters approve the increase, the tax would provide an additional \$50,000 to \$70,000 annually.

Of the total 198 communities and

cities in Iowa that collect a hotel/motel tax, 178 of them charge 7%, Wynja said, noting that Sioux Center would not be out of the norm to increase its hotel/motel tax rate.

If the increase is approved, according to the ballot text, at least 50% of the hotel/motel tax revenues will support city improvement and maintenance projects at Sioux Center recreation areas, the city's convention center, and its cultural and entertainment venues.

Since the introduction of the tax in 2010, the city has been able to main-

tain local amenities and attractions, including the Sioux Center Chamber of Commerce, its Heritage Village, recreation trails and more, according to Wynja.

"It doesn't get less expensive to maintain our amenities, but the money from this tax also helps us to continue to market and promote activities at these facilities as well," Wynja said at the council meeting.

If the increase is approved in November, the 7% tax will go into effect for Sioux Center on January 1.

Maine

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ident of Governmental Affairs and public policy for the American College of Physicians (ACP), told Vox at the time that the 2019 vote reflected a "younger and more diverse" House of Delegates and the growing influence of progressive specialty medicine societies on AMA.

The House took another step toward a new stance on public healthcare in November 2022, when the AMA leaders voted during an interim meeting in Honolulu to approve a resolution supporting advocacy toward "a pluralistic healthcare system, which may include a public option, that focuses on increasing equity and access, is cost conscious, and reduces

burden on physicians."

This resolution received backlash from members, including FMA representatives, who expressed concern AMA's support of a "public option" would lead to the association ending its opposition to single-payer healthcare.

Ryan Mire, MD, ACP President and AMA House of Delegates member, argued that single-payer healthcare is not the only public option, according to MedPage Today. Public healthcare could serve "those who do not have insurance, and those who fall within the gaps of coverage" in private healthcare, Mire said.

That ongoing conflict and the MMA's policy change indicate the single-payer issue is likely to return to the AMA House of Delegates floor for

further debate in the future.

Travel Ban

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after signing the bill.

California's no-travel list had grown to include 26 states and has kept university researchers, elected officials, and state workers from visiting more than half of the country on state-funded visits, *POLITICO* reported.

The primary sponsor of the repeal bill is State Sen. Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), who's openly gay. Atkins is in her final year as Senate leader.

"What we need is messaging that really goes to the heart of what regular people all across this country want, which is to live in peace," said Atkins,

according to *LGBTQ Nation*.

The new media campaign is dubbed the "BRIDGE Project," with BRIDGE being an acronym for "Building and Reinforcing Inclusive, Diverse, Gender-Supportive Equality." Lawmakers allocated \$5 million in the state budget for the campaign.

In 2019, *LGBTQ Nation* guest columnist Cyd Zeigler criticized the travel ban as "a political stunt to boost the appearance of Sacramento politicians' support of the LGBTQ community."

California's travel ban was enacted after North Carolina passed a controversial "bathroom bill" that prohibited transgender people from using the public restroom of their gender identity. The state partially repealed the bill in 2017 and fully repealed it in 2020.

Former Association Leader Brad Claxton Dies

— OBITUARY —

By Todd McElwee

Bradford (Brad) Wayne Claxton, a prominent association executive who chaired both ASAE and PCMA, passed away on April 9 at his home in Carmel, Indiana. He was 88.

During an association industry career that spanned more than a generation and garnered him spot in the Events Industry Council's (EIC) Hall of Leaders (HOL), Claxton was a consummate sector leader and advocate. He was the first Executive Director of the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), spending 25 years in the post. He was also involved in what is now Association Forum, serving as its president for the 1986–1987 term, EIC noted in his HOL online profile.

Brian D. Stevens, Executive Chairman, ConferenceDirect, told

USAE that Claxton was a solid manager, steady and a strong leader. He added he may be only CEO who was chairman of both ASAE and PCMA ever.

In addition to piloting ASAE's volunteer leaders, Claxton served on the Planning Committee and held multiple board posts. In 1998 he was presented with the Key Award. PCMA presented him one of its top honors, and he also earned the Samuel B. Shapiro Award for Chief Staff Executive Achievement from what was then the Chicago Society of Association Executives (CSAE).

Sherrif Karamat, CAE, President & CEO, PCMA and CEMA, said: "Brad Claxton was one of the early pioneers of our industry and PCMA. His dedication to PCMA and the Foundation laid the groundwork

for PCMA's growth and future success. He will be sadly missed but will always be remembered as part of PCMA's family and rich heritage."

Claxton was born on September 26, 1934, in Teaneck, New Jersey. His Flanner Buchanan obituary noted he graduated from the University of Maine in 1956, where he met Patricia Gillette Claxton. They were married for 63 years.

Claxton was preceded in death by Patricia and his brother Bruce. He is survived by his children, Karen (Kelly) Hindman, Brian (Gladys) Claxton, Brad (Veronica) Claxton and Cynthia (Chris) Stump; grandchildren Kyle (Mary), Allie (Alfredo), Patricia, Andrea, Matthew, Brad III, Kaila, C.J. (Maggie) and Corinne; great grandchildren Terrance and Aaliyah; sisters-in-law Marilyn Claxton and Joan Totton; and



brother-in law Gene Gillette.

Visitation and services were held in April at Flanner Buchanan – Carmel. Memorial contributions may be made to the University of Maine or Susan G Komen for the Cure.