



Travel advocates attended U.S. Travel's Destination Capitol Hill event on March 20. Delegates from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia participated, and more than 300 meetings with policymakers took place.

NAR Eliminates Mandatory Buyer Broker Commission in Settlement

By [Julia Stumbaugh](#)

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) has agreed to a \$418 million settlement that could change who pays broker fees and reshape how Americans sell their homes.

NAR will pay out the damages over four years, according to a March 15 announcement during which NAR President Kevin Sears called this "a time of adjustment" for the real estate industry.

If the settlement is approved by a federal court, NAR will no longer require sellers advertising their home on association-affiliated Multiple Listing Services (MLS) to include mandatory compensation for the buyer's agent.

These commission fees, paid by the seller to both the seller and buyer broker, typically cost between 5% and 6% of the home's price.

Now those fees will be "decoupled," with the seller and buyer each responsible for their own agent's commissions in a change that could

Please turn to page 2

U.S. Travel's Destination Capitol Hill Champions Industry in D.C.

By [Todd McElwee](#)

The nation's travel sector showed up in Washington, D.C. last week.

Delegates from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia took to Capitol Hill on March 20 for U.S. Travel Association's annual legislative

fly-in, Destination Capitol Hill. Delegates held more than 300 meetings with top policymakers to discuss industry priorities to increase global competitiveness, drive economic growth and create and support jobs nationwide.

"This year's Destination Capitol Hill

is all about setting the groundwork for a more globally competitive future for travel," said U.S. Travel Association President & CEO Geoff Freeman. "The annual event is a significant opportunity to unite the travel industry—from all 50 states—to speak with lawmakers

Please turn to page 2

Supreme Court Hears Arguments in National Rifle Association Free Speech Case

By [Julia Stumbaugh](#)

The Supreme Court on March 18 heard arguments in a case regarding the National Rifle Association's accusation that a New York state official violated the association's free speech rights.

The NRA is accusing former state financial regulator Maria Vullo of attempting to influence financial institutions against working

with the association. The court "appeared receptive" to NRA's claims, according to the Associated Press (AP).

"This is a First Amendment case. All they need to do is to show that the desire to suppress speech was a motivating factor," said Justice Samuel Alito, per the AP.

One group representing NRA is the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which noted that it "dis-

Please turn to page 3

Inside



Page 3

Page 2
[WEC Louisville Featuring Keynote Duo Mark Schulman, Heather Crider](#)

Page 4
[AHLA Foundation Announces 2024 Board of Trustees](#)

Page 8
[Bobbie Patterson, Longtime Leader of Boise CVB, Dies](#)

ASAE-USAE Travel Scholarship Expanding to Five Recipients

By [Todd McElwee](#)

Interest in the ASAE-USAE Travel Scholarship is at an all-time high, with a record 92 applications received as mid-March. Responding to that demand, ASAE is expanding the program's reach by increasing the number of scholarships awarded from three to five.

The program is designed to support a diverse pool of ASAE members who are committed to advancing their knowledge, network-

ing, and career development in association management.

"The ASAE-USAE Travel Scholarship has been extremely valuable in enabling more eligible association professionals to advance their professional development at ASAE in-person meetings," Morgan Maravich, Vice President, Foundation Relations, ASAE, told *USAE*. "With five scholarships now available, we're looking forward to watching

Please turn to page 7

NEWS

WEC Louisville Featuring Keynote Duo Mark Schulman, Heather Crider

By Todd McElwee

Mark Schulman, a veteran drummer and author who's performed in front of millions while backing the likes of P!NK, Beyoncé, Foreigner and more, and neuro-performance coach Heather Crider will present what is sure to be a headbanging keynote, "Rocking the Rhythms of Leadership," May 21 during MPI's World Education Congress (WEC) Louisville.

Set to the backbeat of live drumming, the session will guide attendees through an electrifying exploration of how the rhythm of rock and roll and the insights of brain science can amplify confidence and performance.

Jessie States, CMP, CMM, Vice President, MPI Academy, said the "two-for-one power combo will help our community members overcome stress by adopting new strategies for the ways they think."

"Mark Schulman has long championed the power of positive attitude to change life outcomes, evidenced by his interviews with industry leaders in a variety of fields, focusing on human

behavior and how it impacts success," said States. "Heather Crider brings the science that brain retraining and neuro-wisdom CAN empower people to greater levels of achievement—actions meeting professionals can employ to take control of their interactions with peers, partners, customers and clients that drive transformative change (while maintaining balance and wellbeing).

Schulman was voted "Top 3 Pop-Rock Drummers" in the *Modern Drummer* Reader's Poll in 2014 and has played four record-breaking world tours with P!NK. He's the author of *Conquering Life's Stage Fright: Three Steps to Top Performance* and earned the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) from the National Speakers Association (NSA).

He said: "I believe that my many years of experience working with some of the greatest performers on the planet has given me a platform for which I can share performance and leadership secrets and perspectives that are uniquely mine."

Crider has collaborated with nu-



Heather Crider



Mark Schulman

merous Fortune 500 companies and is also the host of the Go Reflect Yourself Podcast. She's been featured in *Forbes*, Yahoo! Finance, *Brainz Magazine*, and *Thrive Global*.

"We combine the secrets of the greatest rockstar performers, simple neuroscience techniques, unique kinetic interaction, live musical performance and an exclusive multimedia experience," Crider said. "Our keynote is truly a show from two world-class presenters you would never expect to

share the stage."

For more information, visit mpi.org/wec.

NAR

continued from page 1

increase profits for sellers and raise prices for buyers.

NAR denied any wrongdoing in the settlement.

"Ultimately, continuing to litigate would have hurt members and their small businesses," said interim CEO Nakia Wright. "While there could be no perfect outcome, this agreement is the best outcome we could achieve in the circumstances."

Beginning in mid-July, broker commissions will be prohibited on the MLS. Broker commissions remain an option if offered outside the MLS, according to the association.

NAR will also begin requiring MLS

users to enter into written agreements with buyers in an effort to increase cost transparency.

These changes may decrease commission prices by reducing a process known as "steering," in which buyer brokers guide potential buyers toward homes with higher broker commissions, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

A drop in U.S. real estate broker prices would bring the country more in line with the rest of the world. According to data analysis by the *Wall Street Journal*, U.S. real estate commissions currently tower the average in countries like the United Kingdom (1.3%), Australia (2.5%) or China (2.5%).

Steve Brobeck, former head of the Consumer Federation of America,

told the *New York Times* he expects the NAR's changes to decrease total broker commissions from \$100 billion per year to between \$20 and \$50 billion annually.

The settlement could additionally shake NAR's dominance over the real estate industry.

NAR has succeeded as the largest trade association in the United States in part because of its control over the MLS services in many major cities, in which only NAR-affiliated agents can list homes.

With brokers now able to negotiate commissions outside the MLS, "many agents are likely to rethink their membership in the association," according to the *Times*.

NAR's decision to settle follows a consequential November loss in Kansas City federal court. A jury awarded home sellers impacted by NAR's MLS commission practices \$1.78 billion in damages, which could be tripled under antitrust law. Former NAR CEO Bob Goldberg, who had led the organization since 2017, resigned days after the decision.

NAR isn't the only real estate group changing its commission practices. The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), the trade association representing New York City real estate agents that split from NAR in 1994, announced in January their own members will also be "decoupling" buyer and seller broker commissions.

U.S. Travel

continued from page 1

on issues that are vital to our long-term success and growth."

Travel advocates shared four key requests in meetings with policymakers: lower visitor visa wait times, which average 400 days for top source markets; fully fund the office of the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism for FY 2025; lower customs wait times; and advance the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill.

U.S. Travel said delegates were armed with new data on the travel industry's contributions to the nation's economy and workforce: travel accounted for \$1.3 trillion in direct spending in 2023, which produced an economic footprint of \$2.8 trillion; last year, the sector supported more than 15 million American workers, including 8 million directly; and travel spending generated nearly \$165 billion in total tax revenue, including \$89 billion in state and local tax revenue in 2023, which alleviated an average of \$1,273 in taxes per domestic household.

During the fly-in, U.S. Travel awarded Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA)—both serving on the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure—with the association's Legislator of the Year award.

"Travel cannot thrive without dedicated champions in Congress, and Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen lead the way in advancing policies that enable a more globally competitive travel industry," said Freeman. "Both honorees have made profound contributions toward modernizing travel mobility and ensuring the industry's future success."

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HOTS

HOTS Happy Birthday, Fanaloka... The Nashville Zoo celebrated a rare birthday on March 10: a male spotted fanaloka pup weighing just over 100 grams, according to the Tennessean. Fanalokas, or striped civets, are small nocturnal mammals native to the island of Madagascar. The unnamed pup is the fifth fanaloka to join the Nashville Zoo, which is the only zoo in the United States to host the vulnerable creature, according to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. HOTS recommends Tennesseans in search of a dose of cuteness stop by the zoo and view the baby through the windows in the institution's neonatal care center.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

HOTS Fox Kit Feeding Camouflage... Staff at the Richmond Wildlife Center in Virginia have been going above and beyond in their care of an orphaned fox kit. To prevent the kit from imprinting on her human caretakers, staff are wearing a gigantic fox mask and rubber gloves when they feed the fox, as well as minimizing the amount of human sounds they make, according to the center's Facebook page. The practice, while a bit silly to see, is actually very important in the rehabilitation process for the fox kit. "It's important to make sure that the orphans that are raised in captivity do not become imprinted upon or habituated to humans," the center said in a Facebook post. HOTS is impressed with the con-vixen of the center staff.



Destination DC's Claire Carlin, Sr. Vice President, Partnerships and Alliances, and Nick Price, Sr. Manager, Sports and Events Tourism, head out to deliver cherry pies last week during the organization's Operation Cherry Pie. The annual event symbolizing the bloom of District's cherry blossoms shows Destination DC's appreciation to clients.

WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS, CLUBS AND HOTELS

USAE

PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR 1982 – 2021
Anne Daly Heller

PUBLISHER, USAE, INC.
Ross E. Heller
ross@usaenews.com

COO
James Heller
james@usaenews.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Jonathan Trager
jon@usaenews.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Todd McElwee
todd@usaenews.com

ASSOCIATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR
Julia Stumbaugh
julia@usaenews.com

HOTEL EDITOR
Jordan Bradley
jordan@usaenews.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Diane Nichols
dkn@usaenews.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Danielle Erbe

MARKETING & CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Christy Pumphrey
christy@usaenews.com

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To receive another copy, please contact the paper's circulation department at christy@usaenews.com.

USAE is published weekly except the week of Christmas Day by USAE, Inc. Subscription rate is \$175/year; add \$65 in Canada and Mexico. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to USAE, PO Box 15009, Chevy Chase, MD 20825.

usaenews.com

USAE, Inc.
PO Box 15009, Chevy Chase, MD 20825
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ASAE Relaunches Its ReadyMe Program

By Todd McElwee

ASAE's ReadyMe Program has relaunched, with the association saying significant enhancements to the development program are in place.

ReadyMe is designed to prepare emerging leaders and association professionals with the skills required for effective leadership.

"Cultivating leadership pathways for talented, ambitious and entrepreneurial-thinking association professionals is a strategic priority for ASAE, and research tells us that career success comes in large part from having well-developed essential skills and people skills," said ASAE President & CEO Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE. "The feedback from ReadyMe participants last year was overwhelmingly positive but we want to continue to evolve the

program to meet the changing needs of our developing leaders. We're excited for year two of this unique program."

Following a beta cohort that began in 2022 and stretched over an 18-month period, ASAE incorporated participant feedback in designing the second iteration of ReadyMe with all-new, interactive educational modules focused on essential skills development; a four-month, engaging cohort experience; and content and activities created for association professionals by association professionals, instructional design experts and content SMEs.

ReadyMe includes webinars, virtual meetups and other opportunities to network and build community with other association professionals; one-to-one mentoring with highly qualified, well-respected association C-suite leaders; and an immersive,

in-person Leadership Academy focused on hot topics in leadership and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) education.

ASAE said participants can expect a more streamlined experience. The cohort that began at the end of February will end in June, and then the final cohort for Fiscal Year 2024 will begin in July and end in October. Participants will complete seven online educational modules. The in-person Leadership Academy will take place June 20, at ASAE's Conference Center in Washington, D.C.

"It's tremendous to see the ReadyMe program continue to evolve to be of even greater benefit to aspiring association professionals," said Geoff Freeman, President & CEO, U.S. Travel Association, Chair, ASAE

Please turn to page 8

NRA

continued from page 1

agrees sharply with the NRA on many issues," but is representing the right-wing group "because of the First Amendment principles at stake."

"New York State's attempt to abuse its regulatory power to coerce banks and insurance companies to blacklist the NRA because of its advocacy violates the First Amendment, just as punishing the group directly for its 'gun promotion' views would," said ACLU Legal Director David Cole, who argued the Supreme Court case. "If New York can do this to the NRA, Texas or Florida could use the same tactics against groups advocating immigrants' rights, the right to abortion, or other vital civil liberties."

The lawsuit focuses on Vullo's actions as a representative of the New York State Department of Financial Services, especially following the 2018 mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida.

In the wake of the shooting, Vullo wrote letters to several state banks and other financial service companies warning them of the "reputational risks" of working with NRA. Several banks and insurance companies then stopped doing business with NRA, according to the association's lawsuit.

Vullo has argued her letters did not constitute a threat and were "evenhanded" descriptions of the risks of working with NRA, according to SCOTUSblog.

A federal district court in Binghamton, New York, ruled in favor of NRA before the U.S. Court of Appeals for

the 2nd Circuit reversed the ruling. The NRA then asked the Supreme Court to take on the case in February 2023.

The Supreme Court's ruling on the case, which could shape the future of how free speech protections are applied to nonprofits, is expected by June, according to the AP.

The case follows a New York jury's February decision to find NRA leaders, including former CEO Wayne LaPierre, liable for the mismanagement of funds, and the NRA itself liable for violating state nonprofit law.

A separate trial is yet to take place determining whether or not NRA owes non-monetary damages to New York, which could include the installation of a state-mandated compliance monitor and a future ban on seeking donations in the state of New York.

NEWS

AHLA Foundation Announces 2024 Board of Trustees

By Jordan Bradley

The American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) Foundation announced on March 18 officers for its 2024 Board of Trustees.

Julienne Smith, Chief Development Officer, Americas at IHG Hotels & Resorts, has been appointed Chair, succeeding RLJ Lodging Trust COO and Executive Vice President Tom Bardenett.

Smith has been IHG's Chief Development Officer since July 2022, and has held other roles in development at Hyatt Hotels and Marriott Internation-

al throughout her career in hospitality.

"AHLA Foundation is uniquely positioned to bring together every facet of the hotel industry and strengthen our workforce for collective impact," Smith said.

Smith, who has been active on the foundation's board since 2020, according to her LinkedIn page, said the AHLA Foundation's three key areas of focus for 2024 are building awareness of and access to hotel industry career opportunities—"including retaining top talent"—continuing to fight human trafficking, and advancing women in the industry via the foundation's

ForWard initiative.

When asked what area of the hospitality industry has the most need for growth, Smith noted that hiring practices within the field at large have room for improvement.

"One area where our industry can continue to grow is hiring traditionally untapped or overlooked prospective employees from diverse backgrounds," Smith said. "Due to unconscious bias, people tend to hire those who make us comfortable, and often those are others we know or who look like us. The same applies for individuals striving for roles – people often go for positions held by people who look like them."

A key factor to changing this trend, Smith said, is adopting more intentional diversity and inclusivity practices within the workplace.

"There continues to be a need for innovative programs that foster career opportunities, professional development and advancement for industry employees," Smith said. "One very recent example is the expansion of the Foundation's travel scholarship program in partnership with historically Black colleges and universities. This is a great way to cultivate early inclusion and expose more students to all parts of our industry."

Of her appointment to AHLA Foun-



Julienne Smith

ation's Board of Trustees, Smith said: "The Foundation's work focuses on the single most important thing in our industry—supporting our people, who are the heart of our hotels and who make hospitality a fantastic career path."

Bardenett will remain on the 2024, acting as Immediate Past Chair. The AHLA Foundation also welcomed three new members to the board: Amber Asher, CEO of Standard International; Kevin Osterhaus, President at Graduate Hotels; and Harry Javer, Founder and President of The Conference Bureau.

Pharmacy Association Lobbying for PBM Reform Gains Traction

By Julia Stumbaugh

Efforts by trade associations like the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) and National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) to encourage Congressional regulation of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) seems to be paying off.

Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-ID) announced their support of PBM reform during a March 14 press conference on Capitol Hill.

The press conference was held in conjunction with the NACDS RxIMPACT Day, the association's annual grassroots lobbying trip to Washington, D.C.

PBMs serve as middlemen between pharmaceutical manufacturers and prescribers, who the NACDS and NCPA have argued are the cause of rising prescription drug prices.

"The time for PBM reform was yesterday," Sen. Wyden told the crowd of pharmacy association members. "I'll be working around the clock to get this done as soon as possible."

Former ASAE Chair and NACDS President and CEO Steven C. Anderson and NCPA CEO Doug Hoey joined Wyden and Crapo in speaking at the press conference.

"It's time for Congress to pass real PBM reform, particularly for Americans in Medicare and Medicaid," Anderson said. "Patients and the pharmacies that serve them can no longer wait. It's time to get this done."

Hoey was wearing black, a choice he said was made "to mourn the loss of another pharmacy."

"In 2023, 307 independent pharmacies closed their doors for good. That's about one pharmacy death a

day," Hoey said. "A pharmacy will die at the hands of a PBM today."

NAM later sounded their support of the press conference. The manufacturers' association has been a staunch supporter of PBM reform, having argued that PBMs drive up healthcare costs for manufacturers.

"Manufacturers stand with Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo in their calls for PBM reform as soon as possible," said Chris Netram, Managing Vice President of Policy, NAM.

The press conference continues an ongoing Congressional push toward PBM regulation. A PBM reform package written by Wyden and Crapo passed the Senate Finance Committee in November, and the White House held a "listening session" held on March 4 to discuss the topic of PBM reform.

These measures have received pushback from the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association (PCMA), which represents PBMs.

PCMA argues that PBMs work to negotiate lower drug prices by purchasing bulk orders from manufacturers. It is manufacturers, not PBMs, that are the cause of higher drug prices and that should be subject to higher regulations, PCMA says.

"Rather than take the bait from Big Pharma and those with self-serving agendas, policymakers should hear directly from the PBMs who are actually negotiating against Big Pharma to lower drug costs," PCMA said after the White House's listening session.

The debates over legislative solutions to rising drug prices is ongoing after legislators decided not to include proposed PBM reforms in the first round of federal budget bills signed into law on March 9.

Deal Struck with Developer for Savannah Convention Center Hotel

By Jonathan Trager

The Savannah-Georgia Convention Center Authority has signed an agreement with Songy Highroads and partner Matthews Southwest to build a hotel adjacent to the Savannah Convention Center.

The project could break ground within the next 12 months, the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* reported. Hilton is currently in discussions to flag the hotel, which is expected to have about 400 rooms.

"We are very excited about the prospect of a new deal coming together regarding a new hotel project adjacent to the expanding Savannah Convention Center," Joe Marinelli, President & CEO of Visit Savannah, told *USAE*. "We will soon be able to attract larger national conventions and trade shows to one of the most beautiful and popular visitor destinations in the country."

Based in Alpharetta, Georgia, Songy Highroads has developed several hotels in Atlanta. These include Hyatt Place Centennial Park, which opened in 2019.

"It's a large, exciting and high-profile project," said Songy Highroads Chairman David Songy about the hotel, according to the *Business Chronicle*. "We felt this was a pitch down the middle for us."

Atlanta-based Cooper Carry will be the architect for the hotel. Its design portfolio includes the renovation of Fulton County's Central Library and multiple Georgia Tech buildings.

The Savannah Convention Center is currently undergoing a \$276 million, 361,000-square-foot expansion that has been pushed back by construction delays. The convention center is remaining open during the expansion.

NEWS

Record Number of Unique Book Challenges Reported in 2023

By [Julia Stumbaugh](#)

An all-time high of 4,240 unique book titles at public and school libraries were targeted by censorship attempts in 2023, according to a March 14 report by the American Library Association (ALA).

The total is more than 1.5 times the number of titles targeted in 2022, which set the previous all-time high of 2,571, according to ALA.

Between 2022 and 2023, requests to remove books from public libraries increased by 92%, while requests at school libraries rose by 11%, per ALA.

“The reports from librarians and educators in the field make it clear that the organized campaigns to ban books aren’t over, and that we must all stand together to preserve our right to choose what we read,” said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom.

The censorship attempts were a part of 1,247 separate requests to remove books from libraries, some of which involved more than 100 books each, per ALA.

Almost half (47%) of these requests involved “titles representing the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals,” ALA said.

The association will publish the list of the top 10 most challenged titles on April 8, which has been designated the “Right to Read Day” of National Library Week by ALA.

Meanwhile, ALA urged members join the association’s “Unite Against Book Bans” campaign, which encourages participants to discuss the issue of book censorship at local board or library meetings, letters to the editor, or a message to a local official.

The rise in book challenges coincides with a turbulent time for ALA, which has seen state libraries in Alabama, Idaho, Florida, Missouri,

Texas and Montana leave ALA over the past year over disagreements with the association’s politics.

Most of these state libraries criticized ALA’s defense of children’s books with LGBT themes, racial topics and explicit sexual content, as well as ALA President Emily Drabinski’s self-description on social media as a “Marxist lesbian.”

The ALA has since backed both its book bans policy and Drabinski, whose one-year term expires in July.

The association is also fighting an increasing number of state bills proposing heightened regulation of which books are available in libraries, such as a Florida law passed in 2023, as well as stricter penalties for librarians who distribute materials categorized as “obscene,” such as

laws pending in Wisconsin, West Virginia, Alabama and Idaho.

Caldwell-Stone described these state laws in February as “a threat to our democracy.”

ALA is currently withstanding these challenges without a permanent leader. After former Executive Director Tracie D. Hall abruptly left her position in October, former Princeton Public Library Executive Director Leslie Burger has held the role on an interim basis since November 15.

The search for a new leader is being led by executive search firm Isaacson, Miller with the help of a steering committee of ALA members and staff. A new executive director will be hired “as soon as the right candidate emerges,” according to ALA.

The censorship attempts were a part of 1,247 separate requests to remove books from libraries, some of which involved more than 100 books each, per ALA.

HSMAI Announces New Commercial Strategy Conference Set for June

By [Jordan Bradley](#)

The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) is introducing a new commercial Strategy Conference to their 2024 calendars.

The Strategy Conference is scheduled to take place June 24–25 in Charlotte, North Carolina, at the Charlotte Convention Center. The conference will center its focus around all commercial disciplines in hospitality, with content designed to benefit and educate professionals in distribution, sales, marketing and revenue management.

“We are thrilled to offer a more integrated event that will feature cross-disciplinary speakers, insights, and trainings as the commercial discipline evolves,” said Bob Gilbert, CHME, CHBA, President and CEO at HSMAI.

HSMAI’s Commercial Strategy Conference will offer general sessions focused on good com-

mercial strategy for hotels, legal and regulatory “pitfalls to avoid,” artificial intelligence’s place in the customer experience, economic outlooks, new distribution strategies and trends, and keys to successful leadership.

“HSMAI has been bringing industry professionals together for marketing, revenue optimization, and sales conferences for more than 20 years, leading the way with education, insights, connections, and inspiration,” said Gilbert. “The evolution continues with the new Commercial Strategy Conference.”

HSMAI’s Strategy Conference also features pre- and post-conference workshops on trainings and roundtables June 24–27, respectively, focused on certifications in hospitality digital marketing and revenue management.

Interested parties can register for the HSMAI Commercial Strategy Conference by visiting commercial.hsmail.org.

Aimee Misako Gabel Joins U.S. Travel as Sr. VP, Events and Education

By [Todd McElwee](#)

Aimee Misako Gabel has joined U.S. Travel Association in the new position of Sr. Vice President, Events and Education.

Joining the organization after serving as chief experience officer at RE+ she’ll contribute to the design and implementation of signature events—IPW, ESTO, Summer Summit and Future of Travel Mobility—and also deliver new programs aligned with strategic priorities.

“As the trade association for one of America’s most important industries, I see nothing but opportunity to grow our events in ways that benefit the travel ecosystem,” said Gabel. “I am excited to join this talented team and work closely with our members as U.S. Travel continues to evolve alongside our thriving industry.”

RE+ is the fastest growing and largest renewable energy event in North America, U.S. Travel noted. During her time there, RE+ grew to a top 50 tradeshow, cited for the innovative ways it engaged attendees through significantly expanded programs, strategic initiatives and partnerships, which resulted in quadrupled event revenue. Previously, she was a co-founder of The Rose Company, a consulting firm that supported executive client leadership and event strategy.

“Aimee brings an invigorating combination of event innovation and delivery excellence,” said Ellen



Aimee Misako Gabe

Davis, U.S. Travel’s Executive Vice President, Business Strategy and Industry Engagement. “Her extensive tenure growing high-impact events ensures that she will play a crucial role in crafting valuable experiences for our members and the industry we serve.”

Gabel holds a master’s degree in organization development from American University, a bachelor’s in history and Asian studies from Colorado College, and a certificate in strategy execution for public leadership from the Harvard Kennedy School.

She has served on advisory boards for the Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board, the City of Philadelphia, and the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas.

NEWS

Manufacturer, Producer Associations Support Senate Passage of Recycling Bills

By Julia Stumbaugh

Trade associations representing manufacturers and producers, including the Consumer Brands Association (CBA) and Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS), supported the U.S. Senate's unanimous approval on March 13 of two bills expanding recycling programs across the United States.

The Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to begin a pilot grant program helping rural areas develop recycling programs.

The Recycling and Composting Accountability Act, meanwhile, proposes

establishing a recycling data collection program in order to determine if the country can "implement a national composting strategy in order to reduce contamination rates for recycling," according to the Senate.

The bills are now headed to the House of Representatives, where the National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) called itself "instrumental" in finding a sponsor for companion legislation.

In addition to support from NWRA, the Senate bills were backed by a wide range of producer

and manufacturer associations such as the Aluminum Association, American Beverage Association, American Forest and Paper Association, Can

Manufacturers Institute, International Bottled Water Association and National Association of Manufacturers.

The legislation was also supported by associations representing companies that use these materials for packaging. Both CBA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said the bills would help establish an American "circular economy," in which products are used and reused for longer time periods before being reduced to waste.

"Strengthening rural communities and creating a more circular economy have long been top priorities for the makers of America's top household products, and these two bills are an important step towards both of those goals," said CBA Vice President of Packaging Sustainability John Hewitt.

These two bills both passed the Senate in 2022 with association support, but they did not make it out of their House committee.

Associations will hope for a differ-

ent result in 2024 as manufacturer and producer trade groups continue to campaign for legislation that proposes a more comprehensive national recycling infrastructure, rather than bills attempting to increase federal scrutiny of how producers handle the material used in their own packaging.

Associations such as NWRA, PLASTICS and American Beverage have previously lobbied against extended producer responsibility (EPR) bills like the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act introduced to the New York State Senate in 2023, which would require companies to pay for the cost of recycling their own packaging waste. Trade groups have argued these bills would lead to job losses by raising costs for manufacturers.

While continuing to fight the New York state law, the associations will now push the Republican-led House to consider the twin federal recycling bills.

The Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to begin a pilot grant program helping rural areas develop recycling programs.

— OBITUARY —

Bobbie Patterson, Longtime Leader of Boise CVB, Dies

By Jonathan Trager

Roberta (Bobbie) Mae Patterson, a pioneering destination professional and fixture at the Boise CVB who also served as the first female president of the International Association of Conventions and Visitors Bureaus (now Destinations International), died on March 2 in Boise, Idaho, surrounded by her friends and family. She was 91 years old.

Patterson dreamed up and then worked for the CVB in Boise for nearly 35 years, most of that time as the organization's executive director. Once named Boise's Distinguished Person of the Year, Patterson dedicated herself to building the reputation of Idaho's capital city and encouraging others to visit her beloved destination for business or leisure.

"Bobbie was a true legend," said Visit Boise Executive Director Carrie Westergard, Patterson's successor. "I appreciate all Bobbie did to advance female leadership in the tourism industry and specifically all her years of dedication to Boise and Idaho. She will be greatly missed."

Patterson's friend and colleague Maura Allen Gast, FCDME, Executive Director of the Irving CVB who also served as chair of Destina-

tions International (DI), shared these thoughts about Patterson:

"Bobbie was a true leader and she was always 'all in'—I'm not sure she knew of any other way to be. Certainly, she shattered a glass ceiling within the leadership of IACVB at the time, and that made it possible for more of us to join the ranks as chair along the way.

"But when I think of Bobbie and her true love and passion for Boise and its people, from a truly altruistic point of view, no story better tells hers than her willingness and ability to watch politics take all of their operating revenues away, and then she and her team somehow kept the organization going because the work needed to be done, because Boise needed what visitors make possible. I don't know many people that principled and that inspiring.

"She was a friend, a mentor and a true treasure—her presence will be felt for a very long time, as will her absence from this place."

Another friend and colleague, Bonnie Carlson, President & CEO of the Bloomington CVB in Minnesota, offered these words about Patterson:

"As you may know Bobbie was the first woman to chair the then-IACVB board of directors, and I was the second woman to take that role which was in 2001–2002, so we worked



Bobbie Patterson working in her office earlier in her career

together for many years.

"Bobbie was always advocating for CVBs who were smaller than some of the large cities, giving them access to much needed-education and resources.

"Bobbie tried to bring a different perspective to industry issues, looking at all sides to find solutions for everyone. She was a good leader and compassionate, and she loved our industry."

Patterson traveled extensively throughout the world and took pride in her Irish heritage. An avid fan of Boise State football, Patterson shared seats on the 30-yard line with friends for 20 years.

Roger Dow, former president & CEO

of the U.S. Travel Association, noted that Patterson "was highly engaged not only with U.S. Travel, but with the entire industry."

"Pound for pound, she was one of the nation's most effective DMO directors, despite the size of her beloved Boise market," Dow said. "She was a cherished personal friend whom I will dearly miss."

Don Welsh, President & CEO of DI, spoke at Patterson's memorial service in Nampa, Idaho. He noted that in 1994–1995 she served as the first female chair of the association—which was created exactly 80 years earlier in 1914—paving the way for five female chairs since her

Please turn to page 8

NEWS

ESLA Announces First Collegiate Partnership

By Jordan Bradley

The Extended Stay Lodging Association (ESLA) announced on March 14 its first collegiate partnership with Niagara University's College of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management.

The partnership will provide students of the college with complimentary memberships into the association, and connections to industry professionals currently working in the extended stay segments.

"One of the most important benefits for the students is complimentary [membership]," said Kimberly Rowell, ESLA Board Member and Executive Vice President of Five Star Hospitality. "Secondarily, it's an opportunity for them to have really peer-to-peer communication with experts and icons in the extended stay lodging

field—or the hospitality field as well, truly everyone, even if it's not extended stay. So it's their opportunity to become affiliated with, firsthand, true icons within the industry."

NU hospitality students will also have access to "a library of content" related to various courses of study in the business side of extended stay lodging, said Doug Artusio, founder and CEO of ESLA. Some of the topics include site choice, how to pick insurance companies, profit and loss statements, and "so many topics that usually you only get in part when you're doing an internship—and this will far exceed the scope and depth of the information," Artusio said.

"This is people knowledge," Artusio said. "And it's coming from people with first hand, practical knowledge and then application, versus having a study in the classroom."

"We are proud to accept the invitation from ESLA to offer complimentary memberships, providing specific educational opportunities to our hospitality students focused on the extended-stay segment," said Bridget Niland, Dean of the NU College of Hospitality, Sport, and Tourism Management. "We believe this affiliation will expand our curriculum with current industry data, educational library, gain ample access to active industry experts and executes, and an association with hoteliers."

For Artusio, Rowell and the rest of the ESLA board, a big focus of the association will be in supporting the forthcoming generations of hoteliers in the booming extended stay segment.

"I went to hotel school; I thought I knew it all. I spent 25 years in the business before I started my own com-

pany, [Dellisart Hospitality]," Artusio said. "And I never really learned the business of the business."

ESLA is celebrating its first birthday this month and has plans for a very full second year, according to Rowell and Artusio.

The association is set to complete partnerships with another 10 or more schools in the next four to five months. In addition, ESLA is preparing to roll out educational segments, an advisory council, a new partnership model between suppliers and vendors, and has signed on to be featured on 24 No Vacancy Live podcasts throughout the year.

"This association is for everyone," Artusio said. "Be that owners developers, the brands, suppliers, as well as property managers and hospitality students."

Jason Ware Starts as VP, Events and Experiences for IAEE

By Jonathan Trager

Meetings industry veteran Jason Ware has joined the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) as Vice President of Events and Experiences.

Ware, who entered his new position on March 1, is responsible for the overall planning and execution of all IAEE and subsidiary-related events, including fundraisers. He'll develop new marketplace opportunities for Expo! Expo! IAEE's Annual Meeting & Exhibition and strengthen industry relationships in partnership with IAEE's sales, market-

ing, and membership teams.

"I'm thrilled to join the IAEE team and look forward to helping develop and implement strategy around all global events, fundraisers and marketplace initiatives as it relates to IAEE's strategic plan," said Ware. "I look forward to building upon the rich history of IAEE's events such as the Women's Leadership Forum, Expo! Expo!, Leadership Institute, and other marketplace events."

Ware brings nearly 30 years of experience to the association, most recently serving as vice president of convention housing operations and contracting/sourcing

for MCI USA. He worked in New York City as director of meetings for the Cardiovascular Research Foundation (CRF) and as director of meetings and exhibitions for the American Heart Association. He has also worked for the Dallas-based American Stroke Association.

Ware's early career includes serving as the liaison between MPI International Headquarters and its 60+ local chapters throughout North America. He was hired as a chapter relations manager and later promoted to senior manager of membership marketing.

"Throughout his career, Jason has established strong relationships within the global exhibitions and events industry," said Marsha Flanagan, M.Ed., CEM, President & CEO of IAEE. "He will bring fresh, creative ideas to his role while helping further IAEE's mission. We are excited to have someone with



Jason Ware

his stellar reputation join our team and oversee our portfolio of events and experiences."

Scholarship

continued from page 1

more deserving recipients grow and advance in our community."

Grants of up to \$5,000 will be awarded to five association professionals who meet the eligibility requirements and wish to attend the ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition. ASAE will provide complimentary registration for awardees to attend the meeting and two additional ASAE in-person educational events.

In 2021, Ross E. Heller, founder and publisher of USAE, donated \$100,000 to the ASAE Research Foundation for the creation of a restricted fund that

will provide financial assistance to ASAE members seeking to attend the ASAE Annual Meeting for professional development, networking, and career advancement. The ASAE-USAE Travel Scholarship honors Anne Daly Heller, longtime editor of USAE, who died in 2021.

Travel scholarship applicants must be ASAE members (individual or organization membership). Applicants must be employed by an organization not financially able to support their travel to the 2024 ASAE Annual Meeting. A commitment to continuous learning and professional development is also required.

April 12 is the deadline to apply. Find more information at asaecenter.org.

IGLTA Foundation Celebrates wmnsWORK Scholarship Recipient Analise Sesay...

In honor of International Women's Day, and Women's History Month, the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) Foundation has announced Analise Samantha Delphine Sesay, is the recipient of its wmnsWORK scholarship for the September 2024 cohort. The wmnsWORK program empowers female and non-binary entrepreneurs in the travel industry by providing financial assistance, educational resources, and mentorship opportunities through a

12-week virtual accelerator program.

"I'm grateful to receive the opportunity to participate in an entrepreneurship incubator dedicated to women and nonbinary tour operators and hoteliers like wmnsWORK with support from IGLTA and the IGLTA Foundation," said Sesay. "It feels like a huge relief to have these organizations backing my vision, providing resources for navigating the unique business model of tour operators, and helping me vet partnerships that are grounded in respect and reciprocity."

Sesay is the founder of Common

Please turn to page 8

NEWS

Atrium Hospitality Launches Program to Bolster Women in Hotel GM Roles

By [Jordan Bradley](#)

Atrium Hospitality, a hotel operator overseeing 80 hotels in 28 states, has launched a new program in tandem with March's Women's History Month to help women within the company prepare for and pursue roles as hotel general managers.

The program, called WomenRISE, will see nine women from across Atrium's portfolio of properties complete a nine-month course that will help "hasten the career paths of women

in hospitality, a group that tends to be underrepresented at the general manager level," according to Anneliese Cooper, Atrium's Chief Human Resources Officer.

WomenRISE participants were selected at Atrium properties in Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas, with company leadership at the property and regional levels helping to identify strong candidates and make recommendations, said Cooper.

"During Atrium's portfolio-wide

talent review in 2023, program participants were recognized as high-performing talent representing a variety of backgrounds and experiences and selected to comprise the WomenRISE introductory class," Cooper said. "They come from varying department—including operations, sales and marketing, and finance—and have hands-on experience with well-known hotel brands."

The program was born out of Atrium's Diversity & Inclusion Collective, Cooper said. WomenRISE is intended to prepare women within Atrium for leadership roles and bolster their confidence through educational sessions focused on how to run a successful hotel from the mantle of general manager, network within Atrium, discover their strengths and leadership qualities, and prepare to take the next steps in their pursuit of a hotel general manager role, Cooper added.

Throughout the nine-month program, "we will focus on topics geared toward female leadership and will select a leadership book to read and discuss," Cooper said. "We will explore skills that hotel GMs need to hone—ranging from managing the [profits and losses] of an entire business unit to getting more engaged in the sales process."



The Georgia-based hospitality company's 80-hotel portfolio includes more than 20,000 guest rooms at Hilton, Marriott, IHG and Wyndham-branded properties. With the launch of the program, Atrium is hopeful that completion of the program will encourage the nine women participating in the inaugural WomenRISE program to advance their careers within Atrium when opportunities become available.

"With WomenRISE, we aim to grow Atrium's general manager talent pipeline by nurturing program participants' personal ambitions and facilitating their advancement in hotel leadership by increasing their readiness and their exposure to those senior leaders who make GM hiring decisions," Cooper said. "The intention is to inspire WomenRISE program participants to take that next step to apply for GM opportunities when they become available."

Around Assns.

continued from page 7

Healing, a project dedicated to cultivating interconnectedness among cultural workers globally through travel experiences. Common Healing's mission is to "seed an interconnected web of sustenance that transcends national borders and through which resources can move."

"Through Common Healing, Analise Samantha Delphine is creating a global network where resources flow freely across borders, fostering a more inclusive and supportive travel industry for everyone," said John Tanzella, IGLTA President & CEO. "We are thrilled to celebrate Analise as the recipient of our IGLTA Foundation wmnWORK scholarship, and can't wait to see the impact of Common Healing in the years to come."

Trade Groups Back Legal Challenge of SEC's Market Surveillance Funding...

The Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, Alternative Management Association and Managed Funds Association joined to file an amicus brief on February 15 in support of the American Securities Association (ASA) and Citadel Securities' October lawsuit against the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The lawsuit challenged how the SEC uses broker-dealers and investors to fund its Consolidated Audit Trail (CAT), a database tracking trading activity in the United States. In backing the ASA's lawsuit, the trade groups said this CAT funding method "imposed massive and escalating financial costs on broker-dealers and investors without affording them any genuine role in establishing the CAT's budget."

The ASAE Research Foundation will once again utilize the John H. Graham IV, FASAE, CAE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fund in 2024 to provide scholarships to deserving applicants pursuing professional and personal development through ASAE's ReadyMe Program. The scholarship application period is open until April 1.

Find more information at asaecenter.org.

ReadyMe

continued from page 3

ReadyMe Steering Committee. "We have a responsibility to develop the next generation of association talent. I am proud to be associated with this critical initiative, grateful for ASAE's commitment and excited to continue to mentor and learn from ReadyMe participants."

Patterson

continued from page 6

tenure. She was inducted into the DI Hall of Fame in 2014.

"It was a beautiful tribute to somebody who touched a lot of lives, and I was happy to be there," said Welsh. "I talked about Bobbie not only breaking the glass ceiling, but blowing through it. She was barely 5 feet tall, but when she walked in the room everybody knew she was there and remembered her when she left."

Ross Heller, Publisher of *USAE*, added this about Patterson:

"Bobbie Patterson was a great friend, both to *USAE* as well as to myself and my late wife, Anne Daly Heller.

"She always had a cheerful smile and kind words when seen either at an ASAE or Destinations International (then—two name changes back—the International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus) annual meeting.

"Because she was in the leadership

chain, Bobbie was always 'in the know' as to IACVB's politics. And she never hesitated to share—albeit it, confidentially—good tips (as well as good gossip). It goes without saying, any number of good *USAE* news stories resulted therefrom.

"Even after she retired, we occasionally kept in touch. It is our loss we never got to visit her in her beloved Boise. RIP, good friend."

In retirement, Patterson operated Arrowhead RV Park in Cascade, Idaho, until she was 89. She was actively writing grants on behalf of the RV parks and serving on chamber of commerce boards when she died, according to her obituary posted by the Nampa Funeral Home.

Patterson is survived by her brother, Larry; her daughter, Vicki Jones; four grandsons and seven great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life for Patterson was held on March 19 at the Nampa Funeral Home Yraguen Chapel. A graveside service followed at the Dry Creek Cemetery in Boise.

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