



MPI's staff takes a break for a photo at the association's the EVENT, which was held September 22-24 at Ottawa's Brookstreet Hotel. The experience offered keynote speakers, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities for event professionals. Photo by Pinpoint National Photography

## AHLA Backs Bipartisan Measure Aimed at Curbing Trafficking in Hotels

By Jordan Bradley

A new piece of bipartisan legislation aimed at further addressing human trafficking in hotels was introduced in the House of Representatives on September 19, garnering support from the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA). The bill is currently with the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

The HOTEL (Halting of Trafficking and Exploitation in Lodging) Act of 2024 would encourage federal employees traveling on business to stay in hotels or motels that "enforce the zero-tolerance policy" for trafficking by training employees through either a state government (with the help of trafficking survivors), survivor-led anti-trafficking organizations or organizations recognized nationally for their expertise in addressing issues related to trafficking and exploitation.

The bill was introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Rep. Raja Krishna-

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## Thousands of Hotel Workers Strike in San Francisco, San Diego, Honolulu

By Jordan Bradley

More than 4,000 hotel workers in San Francisco, San Diego, and Honolulu are currently on strike in nationwide strike action coordinated by hotel worker union Unite Here.

Approximately 1,500 hotel workers instituted an indefinite strike beginning September 22 at the three San Francisco hotels: the Grand Hyatt San Francisco Union Square, the Hilton

San Francisco Union Square, and the Westin St. Francis, Marriott property.

Meanwhile, 720 workers at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront have been on strike since September 1 in Unite Here's initial national wave of strikes over Labor Day weekend.

In Honolulu, Hawaii, almost 1,900 hotel workers at the largest hotel on the islands, the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort, walked off of the job on September 24.

The Hilton Hawaiian Village is the largest hotel in Hawaii, according to Unite Here, with almost 4,000 guest rooms.

Workers at all three destinations are seeking increased wages, better benefits, and safer staffing levels, claiming that workloads are unreasonable and pay is not enough to cover living expenses.

"Hotels and hotel workers all suffered during the pandemic, but now

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## Associations Share Worries with Postmaster General about Election Mail

By Todd McElwee

Sharing concerns about election mail service, the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED), National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and presidents of 29 local election official associations dispatched a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy roughly two months before America goes to the polls.

Primary concerns addressed in the correspon-

dence include inconsistent training for USPS staff, excessively long delivery times and an increase in mail returned as undeliverable. The Postmaster General responded, guaranteeing the correspondents he'll work with them to ensure a smooth election process.

"Over the course of the last year, election officials across the country have raised serious questions about processing facility operations, lost or delayed

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## Illinois Dept. of Commerce Blasts Visit Florida over LGBTQ+ Website

By Jonathan Trager

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Office of Tourism earlier this month announced via social media platforms that it "stands proudly" with the LGBTQ+ community after Visit Florida removed its LGBTQ+ travel resources from its website.

Visit Florida over the summer quietly removed a landing page for the state's

LGBTQ-friendly travel destinations, NBC News reported. The landing page had an "LGBTQ Travel" section that previously featured blog posts and videos related to the state's gay-friendly beaches, Pride events, and LGBTQ road trip ideas.

"Florida's decision to disrespect and disavow a whole group of tourists for how they live or who they love is disheartening and raises questions about

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# NEWS

## Google Xi Delivering CoLaboratory at IMEX America

By Todd McElwee

Experimental workshops and activations designed to encourage presence, conversation, play, exploration and connection will be on tap when Google Xi brings its CoLaboratory back to IMEX America.

Show organizers said Google Xi will introduce event and experience professionals to different ways of applying design thinking, fostering collaboration and delivering on the promise of inclusion at their events through an ongoing partnership with IMEX.

Megan Henshall, Strategic Solutions Lead, Global Events at Google, said: “What we have planned for IMEX this year is audacious. I can’t wait for

people to interact with the amazing thinkers and change-makers we’re bringing with us, and I’m so curious about what we’ll see, hear and learn from mixing Xi with IMEX in new ways! Last year was so joyful and enlightening, and I already know what we’ve cooked up for 2024 is going to blow it out of the water.”

Sessions looking at belonging, conversation, magic and neurodiversity are on the agenda. After more than two years of development, the Google Xi team will launch the Belonging Playbook, designed by Storycraft Lab with contributions from Valuegraphics. The initiative is the result of multiple research efforts and thousands of in-person data touchpoints globally including David Allison’s Belonging

Index. Sessions will reveal a first look at new design tools included in the Playbook and guide planners on how to embed them in their own events.

Victoria Chance, one of the founders of My Neighbor’s Voice, will examine listening in her session. The mission of My Neighbor’s Voice is creating productive community connections via safe spaces where everyone is invited to share their personal stories, thoughts and opinions about how to best live together.

Magician and interdisciplinary artist Derek DeGaudio will bust the myth of a magician never revealing their secrets. He’ll explore the tension between illusion, deception and real magic, sharing what his experiences have revealed to him about his purpose, both in art and life.

The Neu Project Resilience Room powered by Google Xi and Hello! DMC returns to the show and will serve as a calming and restorative retreat for all attendees, located alongside a quiet space, sponsored by Lux Lounge. Additionally, the Neu Project has partnered with Rachel Lowenstein, who has helped reshape how marketers and the world see autism. Together, they will host a neu-



Megan Henshall

ro-friendly approach to “happy hours” and networking.

“Less formal and more friendly, this space is designed by—and for—the neurodiverse community, where you can come as you are, recharge your social batteries, and find your crowd,” organizers said.

IMEX America 2024 will be at Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas from October 8–10. Smart Monday, powered by MPI, is October 7. More information can be found at [imexamerica.com](https://imexamerica.com).

## Hotel Strike

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the hotel industry is making record profits,” said Gwen Mills, International President of Unite Here. “These huge hotel corporations can afford to reverse COVID-era cuts and give us wages that are enough to live on, health care that’s affordable, and workloads that don’t break your body.”

Unite Here said more strikes could happen at any time as negotiations are ongoing.

While workers of a hotel are striking, the union said, “picket lines will run outside struck hotels for up to 24 hours a day. During earlier strikes, guests experienced disruptions including unavailable daily housekeeping, towels and linens piled up in hallways, piles of trash visible outside, closed bars and restaurants, and reduced pool hours.”

The union encourages guests not to stay at hotels where workers are striking, and to consult the union’s website for a travel guide and labor

dispute map at [fairhotel.org](https://fairhotel.org).

An unspecified number of striking hotel workers and Unite Here union members traveled to Washington, D.C., on September 23 to lobby Congress for better consumer protections for hotel guests against resort fees.

“The union will be lobbying for changes to legislation supported by hotel corporations that would limit states’ abilities to regulate resort fees,” Unite Here said, arguing that resort fees, along with “other COVID-era service and staffing cuts, get in the way of providing the hospitality that guests expect and appreciate about staying at hotels.”

During the lobby visit, Unite Here representatives met with congressional staff, including Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

“We’re in Washington because guests and hotel workers share a common interest—we all want hotels to reverse their COVID-era cuts, protect guests from unpopular resort fees, and put their focus back on providing the best possible hospitality,” said Mills.

## LGBTQ+

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who’s really welcome in the Sunshine State,” said Pritzker. “Illinois stands proudly with the LGBTQIA+ community and offers valuable travel resources for destinations, experiences and events—365 days a year.”

“By embracing inclusivity and making resources easily accessible, we’re proving that Illinois is a place where all travelers can feel safe and authentically themselves,” said Daniel Thomas, Deputy Director of DCEO, Office of Tourism. “Whether it’s through our Midwestern hospitality, annual Pride events, or diverse experiences, everyone is welcome in Illinois.”

Many LGBTQ+ travelers have recently expressed concern about visiting Florida, which under the administration of Gov. Ron DeSantis has

pursued what they consider to be an anti-LGBTQ agenda. For example, DeSantis has sought to forbid classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity and supported a ban on gender-affirming care for minors.

Keith Blackburn, who heads the Greater Fort Lauderdale LGBT Chamber of Commerce, said the move by Visit Florida was “disgusting” and it seems like an attempt to “erase” the LGBTQ+ community, according to CBS News.

Blackburn also said the change and other anti-LGBTQ+ policies out of the state capital of Tallahassee make it more difficult for him to promote South Florida tourism because he encounters prospective travelers or travel promoters who say they don’t want to do business in the state, CBS News reported.



Almost 2,000 workers and members of the Unite Here union at the largest resort in Hawaii, the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort, instituted an open-ended strike on September 24.

### Stay Connected



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# HOTS

*HOTS Personal Convictions at PCMA... HOTS commends PCMA for selecting former U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney as one of two main stage keynote speakers at its annual Convening Leaders 2025 conference to be held January 12–15 in Houston.*

Cheney, the daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, was one of 10 Republicans to vote to impeach former President Donald Trump for “incitement of insurrection,” breaking from Republican Party norms. At the beginning of September, Cheney announced her endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris for president, again crossing party lines. And

on September 20 at the Cap Times Idea Fest in Madison, Wisconsin, Cheney suggested that a third political party would be necessary if Trump is defeated in the forthcoming presidential election, the New York Times reported.

“There is certainly going to be a big shift, I think, in how our politics work,” Cheney said at the event. “I don’t know exactly what that will look like. I don’t think it will just simply be, well, the Republican Party is going to put up a new slate of candidates and off to the races. I think far too much has happened that’s too damaging.”

At PCMA’s Convening Leaders on January 14, Cheney will “set the tone” for the convention and will “share how she arrived at her personal convictions, specifically the role of principled leadership,” the association said. Cheney’s insights will also “highlight how business events can factor into combatting divisiveness and fostering the exchange of ideas in a democratic society,” PCMA added. With the PCMA Convening Leaders conference scheduled just after the next president of the United States is to be inaugurated, HOTS will certainly be front row at Cheney’s keynote.



Maunda Land, Sr. Director, Conscious Inclusion, ASAE; and Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE, President & CEO, ASAE, attend the 25th Annual Power of Associations Summit Awards at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., on September 24.

WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS, CLUBS AND HOTELS

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## Tampa Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

*Donates \$100,000 to Local Organizations*

By Jordan Bradley

The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa, Florida, is celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month with a month-long itinerary of events—launching “My Rhythm. My Flavor. Mi Gente”—and donated \$100,000 to 10 area Hispanic organizations on September 15.

“These donations reflect the casino resort’s ongoing commitment to giving back to the community and supporting initiatives that play a vital role in empowering the Hispanic com-

munity,” Hard Rock said.

The Tampa Hard Rock property’s donations were distributed to the following organizations: City of Tampa Mayor’s Hispanic Heritage Committee, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Hispanic Advisory Council, the Hispanic Heritage Scholarship Fund, the Hispanic Professional Women’s Association, the Hispanic Resource Family Cultural Center, the Hispanic Services Council, the Hope Community Center, Latino Leadership, Prospera, and Tampa Hispanic Heritage.

According to the City of Tampa’s

data, based on the United States census, “the Latino/Hispanic population in Tampa has grown to 26.4% and it represents the largest and youngest minority group in the nation.”

“As we observe Hispanic Heritage Month, we celebrate the vibrant cultures and remarkable contributions of Hispanic and Latin Americans in our region,” said Estefania Diaz-Balart, Vice President of Latin Business Development at Seminole Gaming “This initiative is a reflection of our dedication to supporting local Hispanic organizations and fostering stronger ties within the community during this important cultural celebration.”

First established as Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968, National Hispanic Heritage Month has been celebrated each year from September 15 to October 15 since 1988 and highlights “the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America,” according to the event’s official website.

The beginning of the heritage month, September 15, is the anni-

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The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Tampa donated \$100,000 to local groups supporting the Hispanic and Latin community in Tampa, Florida to commemorate National Hispanic Heritage Month.

# NEWS

## St. Regis New York Celebrates 120th Anniversary with Renovated Spaces

By Jordan Bradley

The flagship St. Regis property, the iconic St. Regis New York on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, is celebrating its 120th birthday with a nip and a tuck of several of its public spaces.

The renovation and redesign at the St. Regis New York, part of Marriott International's luxury collection of hotels, brings a modern yet glamorous aesthetic to the property's lobby, its King Cole Bar, lobby restaurant The Drawing Room, and a new dining location, La Maisonette.

"This anniversary reflects our enduring legacy of luxury, personalized service, and contemporary elegance that has captivated guests around the world," said Jenni Benzaquen, Sr. Vice President of The Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, and Bvlgari Hotels & Resorts.

The refresh was spearheaded by Champalimaud Design and aimed to "embrace the design legacy of the hotel as well as its original Beaux-Arts

architecture, while transforming it into a lavish urban heaven that would feel like home for the Astor family in the 21st century," Marriott said.

Built by American business magnate, John Jacob Astor IV, in 1904, the St. Regis New York was created to rival "the finest hotels in Europe," Marriott said, and "quickly became the center of Manhattan social life."

Throughout the years, the hotel has played host to "creative and intriguing personalities of each era from Salvador Dali to Marilyn Monroe" and can claim the title of "birthplace" of the still-beloved-by-brunch-enthusiasts Bloody Mary cocktail, according to Marriott.

"Since 1904, The St. Regis New York has stood as a beacon for generations of global travelers looking to be in the center of Manhattan and surround themselves in the timeless allure which has defined the Fifth Avenue icon from its founding by John Jacob Astor IV," said Octavia Marginean-Tahiroglu, General Man-



The St. Regis New York's renovated lobby features red accents and repurposed decor from the original 1904 lobby.

ager at the St. Regis New York. "The renovation signals a milestone moment for the cherished New York City icon as we present our masterfully redesigned public spaces this fall—in our 120th anniversary year."

The redesign of the lobby plays homage to Astor's wife, Caroline, and her favorite flower, the American Beauty Rose, with a new color scheme splashed with rose red area rugs, and boasts an expanded floor plan.

During the renovation, "the reception area's original exterior facing windows were discovered and restored, incorporating a stained-glass window based on the room's original 1905 Tiffany window design," Marriott said. The original cages that surrounded the front desk have been restored and repurposed as wall decor, and the lobby's original Tiffany & Co. chandelier maintains its place in the welcoming space.

"We have created spaces with en-

ergy and splendor, layering the classic architecture with contemporary elements, reinvigorating the hotel with magic, as the Astors had done when the hotel first opened," said Alexandra Champalimaud of Champalimaud Design. "The public spaces will have a sense of openness and a palette featuring emerald greens and red rose tones that evoke the grandeur of the Astors' legacy."

The St. Regis New York's existing ground floor restaurant, The Drawing Room, and the King Cole Bar just beyond it have been redesigned and refreshed. The Drawing Room now features the Astor Library's original private collection of books.

The renovation also includes a new food and beverage option, La Maisonette, which will serve breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea in a space inspired "by the hotel's original breakfast room from the 1910s and French design," Marriott said.

## MPI Stages the EVENT in Ottawa

By Todd McElwee

Incorporated into its signature events portfolio for the first time, MPI's the EVENT drew more than 300 attendees—including north of 100 planners—from September 22–24 at Ottawa's Brookstreet Hotel.

Embracing the "Origin Stories" theme, MPI said the EVENT maintained its distinct, rebellious spirit with unique, high-energy formats which produced actionable education and networking opportunities.

"The EVENT is a crucial touchpoint for MPI's Canadian community and beyond," said Drew Holmgreen, Chief

Experience Officer, MPI. "It showcases the power of local leadership and creative collaboration in delivering professional development opportunities that resonate globally. As part of MPI's signature event portfolio, we are excited to continue expanding the reach and relevance of the EVENT to meet the evolving needs of our community."

Educational content at the EVENT was curated by the MPI Academy and featured concurrent sessions aligned with the "Origin Stories" theme, along with keynotes covering a range of topics, including:

A reflective yet forward-looking

artificial intelligence session by Amber Mac, who also spoke at the inaugural the EVENT in 2018.

- Inspirational life lessons from Michael Kutcher
- Redefining high performance insights from Ty Bennett and his 14-year-old son, a Ninja Warrior competitor
- Sustainable event guidance from industry expert Leor Rotchild
- The "Solution Room" led by Ruud

Janssen, sparking problem-solving and creative collaboration

MPI added: "The 'Origin Stories' theme was further enhanced through a number of Indigenous Peoples ac-

tivations threaded throughout the program. These included a micro-keynote from Dr. Daniel Brandt and a traditional lighting ceremony conducted by Inuit Elder Zakal, bringing depth and cultural relevance to the event's overall experience."

The EVENT's hosted buyer program brought together 40 planners with suppliers, generating nearly 1,000 total appointments.

The host city for next year the EVENT will be announced in November. MPI's Signature Events include the WEC and Global Meetings Industry Day.

**"The EVENT is a crucial touchpoint for MPI's Canadian community and beyond," said Drew Holmgreen, Chief Experience Officer, MPI.**

## Election Mail

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election mail, and front-line training deficiencies impacting USPS's ability to deliver election mail in a timely and accurate manner," the letter stated. "Despite repeated engagement with USPS Election and Political Mail headquarters staff and state/regional Managers of Customer Relations, we have not seen improvement or concerted efforts to remediate our concerns. In fact, many of the issues raised by election officials are echoed in the recent findings of the USPS Office of Inspector General Audit, Election Mail Readiness for the 2024 General Election."

NASED President Mandy Vigil, NASED Incoming President Bryan Caskey, NASS President Steve Simon, and NASS President-Elect Michael Watson were amongst the signers.

In his response, DeJoy sought to

alleviate the anxieties of NASED, NASS and their co-signers. He noted in the 2020 general election, USPS delivered 99.9% of ballots from voters to election officials within seven days and that a Performance Excellence Team, comprised of local officials and postal leaders, had been established.

"Our 650,000 employees are deeply committed to the secure and timely delivery of the nation's election mail and to ensuring that we fulfill our important role in providing a secure and effective way for citizens to participate when policy makers decide to use mail as part of their elections," DeJoy said. "We look forward to continuing our work together in a collaborative fashion, and we encourage you to bring specific concerns to our direct attention so we can help and resolving any issues as quickly as possible."

CNN reported a record 43% of voters cast mail ballots in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

— Scene At The 25th Annual Power of Associations – Summit Awards —



# NEWS

## NCBMP Hosts State of Black Tourism Event in Washington, D.C.

By Todd McElwee

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) legislation has been introduced and signed into law across the nation. Earlier this month, the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals' (NCBMP) delved into the topic during the 12<sup>th</sup> annual State of Black Tourism event at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C.

Corresponding with *USAE*, Jason Dunn, CEO, NCBMP, noted discussions centered on how organizations are masterfully navigating the intricate dynamics of DEI legislation and opening up about their decision processes.

A panel moderated by Melissa Cherry, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Miles Partnership, included Erika Broadwater, National President & CEO, National Association of African Americans in Human Resources; John F. Howard, International Executive Director, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; Martinique Lewis, President, Black Travel Alliance; Keshia Robinson, Director Of Operations and Events, National



The National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP) recently hosted its 12th Annual State of Black Tourism event at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. Shown here (left to right) are board members: Jason Dunn Sr., CEO; Richard L. Snow, Chairman Emeritus, United Negro College Fund; Natasha Ross, Society for Research in Child Development; Sharon Blaylock, African Methodist Episcopal Church; Gina Lawrence, President, NAACP, Nicholas Wiggins, Chairman, Values Partnerships; Marlinda A. Henry, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International; and Eugene Anderson, Secretary, ENA Strategies LLC. Photos by Traphixdesigns.com

Society of Black Engineers; and Van L. Strickland, Director of Conventions, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, shared their experiences and information concerning the political landscape.

“The influence of DEI (and anti-DEI)

policies and legislation on the tourism and hospitality industry can vary widely, affecting everything from workforce diversity and talent recruitment to destination perception and overall economic impact,” NCBMP said. “Grasping these impacts is essential for industry professionals as they devise strategies to overcome potential obstacles and appeal to a diverse array of travelers.

Data from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* tracking from August 2023, shows 86 DEI bills have been introduced, with 14 becoming law. Legislation has popped up in 26 states with Idaho, North Dakota, Wyoming, Texas, Utah, Iowa, Kansas, Indiana,

Tennessee, North Carolina and Florida now boasting laws.

“Examining data from Future Planners’ *The State of the Meetings and Conventions Industry, 2024*, it was shown more than 60% of planners believe the impact of local politics and importance of DEI via meeting attendees and speakers will increase. Only 5.6% and 7.9% of those surveyed expected a decrease.

Looking at factors promoting destination re-evaluation, attendees learned general political reputation (53.7%) and political or social unrest issues (48.2) were paramount. Racial and gender equality consideration followed, with more than 40% each.

## Hotels Act

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moorthi (D-IL), who say the bill “would ensure that the U.S. Government’s ‘preferred places of accommodation for hotel and lodging’—where federal agencies host conferences and federal employees stay when they travel—are committed to training staff on how to recognize, prevent, and respond to human trafficking.”

Smith is the author of five other laws to combat human trafficking and said the HOTEL Act “will help empower hotels to train their staff using free online trainings and resources, adopt procedures to regularly educate and report violations, and provide information and resources to potential victims.”

Kevin Carey, Interim President and CEO of AHLA, said: “The HOTEL Act recognizes the crucial role hotels play in the fight against human trafficking, and we are proud to support this important legislation. We look forward to working with Reps. Smith and Krishnamoorthi and lawmakers across the House and Senate to pass this legislation.”

The measure is also intended to ensure hotel employee protection from retaliation when reporting instances of trafficking or suspected trafficking.

“We also want to protect employees who report these crimes from any retaliation and ensure proper coordination with local and federal authorities. Hotel employees are uniquely positioned to help report and stop human trafficking, but only

if they have the knowledge and ability to recognize it,” said Krishnamoorthi. “By creating a federal employee travel preference for accommodations that voluntarily train their staff to identify human trafficking, the HOTEL Act will help ensure many more hotel staff members are equipped to stop exploitation and help survivors.”

Under the proposed HOTEL Act, a hotel could work with the AHLA Foundation and its 2019 initiative, No Room for Trafficking (NRFT), which offers free training modules for hotel staff.

“Through the AHLA Foundation’s No Room for Trafficking initiative, the hotel industry is united in the effort to prevent human trafficking and support survivors,” said Anna Blue, President of the AHLA Foundation. “The collective impact of the industry can accelerate innovative human trafficking prevention efforts and upstream strategies to make a positive difference in the communities where we work and live.”

Training modules through the NRFT focus on teaching hotel staff methods to identify the signs of trafficking, best practices for displaying human trafficking prevention signage, establishing trafficking policies, and coordinating with law enforcement.

Along with AHLA, the legislation has garnered support from the Protect All Children from Trafficking (PACT), a nonprofit dedicated to ending child sex trafficking internationally, and Hope for Justice, a global nonprofit focused on ending trafficking and preventing modern slavery.

## Tampa Hard Rock

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versary of independence for several Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, and Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence on September 16.

As part of the month-long celebration, the Hard Rock Tampa will host Latin Nights at the property’s L Bar. From 8 p.m. to midnight, guests are

invited to enjoy “evenings of rhythm, flavor and fun” featuring specialty cocktails and live entertainment.

The casino hotel will also unveil a new mural by Carlos Solano, a Puerto Rican-Colombian American artist, and a memorabilia featuring Latin superstars, including Juanes, Celia Cruz, Carlos Santana, Maluma, Gloria Estefan, Sergio Valin, Jose Guadalupe Esparza, Dave Navarro, Los Lobos, Julieta Venegas, and more.

## Stay Connected

@USAEnews

# NEWS

## Walter E. Washington Convention Center Awarded LEED Platinum

By Jonathan Trager

The Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C., announced on September 23 that it has been awarded LEED Platinum, the highest level of certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the most widely used green building rating system in the world. LEED certification addresses design, construction, and operations practices that improve environmental and human health.

“Achieving LEED Platinum took a lot of hard work, but we strive to be

the greatest Convention Center in the world and have the highest quality of service for our customers,” said Angie M. Gates, President & CEO of Events DC. “I am thrilled to add our LEED Platinum certification to the city’s roster and make Washington, D.C., a leader in LEED-certified spaces. I thank the Events DC team for working tirelessly to execute on our commitment to sustainability and excellence.”

The Walter E. Washington Convention Center achieved LEED certification for implementing strategies and solutions in areas including sustainable site development, water savings,

energy efficiency, materials, selection and indoor environmental quality.

For example, the convention center reduced its energy use by 25,306,767 kBtu—equivalent to removing approximately 440 cars from the road for a year—by upgrading its lighting, heating, and cooling systems, and creating other efficiencies. With newly integrated water efficiencies throughout the facility, water consumption was also reduced by 3,790,000 gallons, enough to fill about six Olympic-sized swimming pools.

“LEED certification is the ultimate recognition of global green building leadership, signaling that a space

has undergone rigorous third-party verification and meets the highest green building standards,” said Peter Templeton, President & CEO of USGBC. “The success of LEED is due to the partnership and support of those committed to advancing green building and sustainability. Each new LEED certification brings us one step closer to revolutionizing the spaces where we live, learn, work and play.”

More than 197,000 commercial and institutional projects are currently participating in LEED in all 50 states and more than 186 countries and territories.

## Around Associations

### CLIA Releases Environmental Technologies and Practices Report...

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) has released its annual Global Cruise Industry Environmental Technologies and Practices Report. CLIA said the offering shows progress by the sector in advancing its environmental and sustainability agenda, including investments in ships and technologies for the uptake of transitional and alternative fuels.

“Cruise lines are continuing to reduce their emissions at sea and at berth in pursuit of net zero emissions by 2050,” said Kelly Craighead, President and CEO of Cruise Lines International Association. “This year’s environmental technologies report demonstrates their progress, with the industry investing in engine technologies with conversion capabilities that will allow ships to use more renewable energy sources as they become available and making important incremental steps to employ a range of other environmental technologies and practices to advance the industry’s wider sustainability initiatives.”

Find the complete report at [clia.org](http://clia.org).

### National Association of Home Builders Tell Congress Administration Rule is Hurting Housing...

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has informed Congress of the ways the Biden administration’s latest interpretation of the waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule has muddied the regulatory process and exacerbated the housing affordability crisis.

In 2023, the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) that redefined the scope of the Clean Water Act and compelled the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide additional regulatory guidance for builders and developers.

“The federal agencies are not faithfully adhering to the Supreme Court’s holdings, and the regulated public has been stiff-armed on implementation guidance,” Vince Messerly, President of the Streams and Wetlands Foundation, a nonprofit wetlands mitigation bank based in Ohio, testified before a congressional panel.

NAHB said the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers are blatantly overstepping their federal authority regarding jurisdictional waters of the United States, so the association is urging Congress to consider the following improvements to the Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting process:

If the agencies continue to refuse to provide regulatory definitions for either relatively permanent water or continuous surface connection, Congress must step in and define these terms.

Congress must ensure the agencies prioritize responding to jurisdictional determinations to process requested Clean Water Act Section 404 permits in a timely manner.

Regulatory changes to the definition of WOTUS should not invalidate an approved jurisdictional determination during its lifespan. With each administration crafting their own WOTUS rule, home builders who may have held ap-

proved jurisdictional determinations from a prior administration have had their validity denied not because of changes in the environmental conditions found on their property, but rather due to court rulings or changes in a new administration’s priorities.

Find more information at [nahb.org](http://nahb.org).

**PCMA New York Area Chapter Announces Holiday Celebration and ACE Awards...** On December 11, the PCMA New York Area Chapter (NYPCMA) will host its NYPCMA Holiday Celebration and ACE Awards.

More information will be available at [newyork.pcma.org](http://newyork.pcma.org).

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A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a blue suit jacket over a light-colored t-shirt, stands in the center. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a composite image: on the left, a modern spa with a pool and lounge chairs; on the right, a large, ornate theater filled with an audience.

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