



Experience Scottsdale welcomed a guest from the North Pole as Santa Claus joined Steven Schopf, The Scottsdale Resort and Spa, Curio Collection by Hilton; Nicole Hobbs, Mountain Shadows; and Tracy Jackson, CMP, Experience Scottsdale, at Association Forum's Holiday Showcase on December 5 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

Federal Court Issues Injunction Against Corporate Transparency Act *NFIB and NSBA Applaud Ruling*

By Todd McElwee

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and National Small Business Association (NSBA) are celebrating an important legal victory.

On December 3, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas granted NFIB's request for a preliminary injunction, blocking the Treasury Department from enforcing the Corporate Transparency Act's (CTA) beneficial ownership information (BOI) reporting requirements.

"This ruling is a huge victory for small businesses nationwide, and just in time" said Beth Milito, Executive Director of NFIB's Small Business Legal Center. "For many Main Street small businesses, they were a mere four weeks away from the deadline to file their information in accordance with the CTA. The BOI reporting requirements are a harmful invasion of small business owners' privacy and a misuse of their valuable time. Thank-

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Incoming Dept. of Gov. Efficiency Leader Scrutinizes NYC Hotel Migrant Agreements

By Jordan Bradley

Vivek Ramaswamy, President-elect Donald Trump's pick to co-lead the as-yet-established Department of Government Efficiency, has called attention to New York City for paying \$220 million to house migrants and asylum seekers in Manhattan's Roosevelt Hotel.

The Roosevelt Hotel was closed in 2020 as a result of the pandemic and remained closed until it was tapped

as a shelter for asylum seekers in May 2023. Since its reopening, the hotel has operated as an entry point where asylum seekers register with city officials, undergo medical exams, and are connected with services. If they choose to stay in New York City, the asylum seekers are assigned a room, either at the hotel or at other shelters throughout the city, according to a September 2023 report from the *New York Times*.

According to a June 2023 article

from the *Indian Times*, the Roosevelt Hotel is owned by the state-run Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), which leased the property in 1979 and eventually purchased it 20 years later.

The contract between the PIA and the city stipulates that NYC administration will operate the hotel for three years, providing services and rental facilities for 1,250 rooms for migrants, Khawaja Saad Rafique, former Pa-

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Rosen Hotels Appoints Frank Santos as New CEO

By Jordan Bradley

Rosen Hotels and Resorts, an Orlando-based collection of boutique hotels and resorts, announced the promotion of the company's Chief Financial Officer, Frank Santos, CHAE, CHA, to the position of Chief Executive Officer.

The company made the announcement on December 3, less than a week after the passing of Rosen Hotel's Founder and former CEO, Harris Rosen.

Santos was hired as Rosen Hotels' CFO in 1985, officially stepping into his post

in January 1986 and working closely with Rosen for almost 39 years. Eventually, Santos also stepped into the role of Vice President at the company.

"It is an honor," said Santos. "I will always be grateful for the privilege to lead this great company that Mr. Rosen poured his heart and soul into building for 50 years."

According to Rosen Hotels, Santos and Rosen worked together on several community projects, including the Tangelo Park and Parramore preschool

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North Carolina's Christmas Tree Industry Hit Hard

By Todd McElwee

Roughly two months after its landfall, Hurricane Helene is still impacting the holiday season for North Carolina's Christmas tree growers. Damage from the storm combined with labor shortages and other issues has made 2024 a year many farmers would like to forget.

"The hurricane hit just a few weeks before harvest so the growers' focus has been to repair roads, culverts, and bridges so they could ship their trees this season," Tim O'Connor, Executive Direc-

tor, National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA), told *USAE*. "They are still harvesting and shipping trees which is their busiest time of the year. The longer-term damage will include replanting the trees that were lost to mudslides and repair/replace buildings that may have been damaged. That will become their focus after the season has been completed."

North Carolina has 940 growers producing approximately 53 million trees on more than 33,000 acres, the North Carolina Christmas

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NEWS

Waldorf Astoria New York Now Accepting Reservations for Spring Opening

By [Jordan Bradley](#)

This Waldorf Astoria New York in Midtown Manhattan has announced the hotel will begin to take reservations on December 10 for stays next year after pausing them in 2017 due to an ongoing renovation.

The historic 375-room hotel is currently undergoing “a multi-year meticulously and thoughtfully-crafted restoration effort” throughout the property that is expected to be completed by spring 2025, according to Hilton.

“The reopening of Waldorf Astoria New York is more than a milestone—it marks the beginning of a bold new era for our brand,” said Dino Michael, Sr. Vice President and Global Head of Hilton Luxury Brands.

According to CoStar, the Waldorf Astoria that stands today was built in 1931, after the original was demolished to make way for the Empire State Building. Conrad Hilton, Founder of Hilton Hotels, bought the Waldorf in 1949 and was renowned for its elegance, hosting “a decadent buffet” of A-list guests throughout the 1900s, according to *Forbes*.

“Waldorf Astoria New York has always been the place to be in New York

City and whether you are a visitor or a New Yorker, we know so many around the globe have their own fond stories with our hotel,” said Luigi Romaniello, Managing Director of the Waldorf Astoria New York.

In 2015, the Waldorf Astoria was acquired from Hilton by China’s Anbang Insurance Group for \$1.95 billion. Two years later, the group closed the property to begin the restoration. Following a series of delays, the inaugural Waldorf Astoria is close to finishing its restoration led by architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill with interior design done by Parisian design firm Pierre-Yves Rochon.

“For over a century, this legendary hotel has defined glamour and sophistication, and now it will serve as the flagship of a reimagined Waldorf Astoria. We’re thrilled to welcome guests back to this famed address, where timeless elegance meets modern luxury,” Michael said.

The restoration and redesign features completely reimagined guest rooms and suites with Art Deco accents and modern comforts, providing guests with “a sanctuary of refined elegance” and “a haven of tranquility,” Hilton said.



The Waldorf Astoria in New York City will begin taking reservations on December 10 for stays beginning in spring 2025.

“Visitors returning to the property will notice many of the historical elements, from the Grand Ballroom to the lobby with the famous Waldorf Astoria clock, have been restored to bring back the original grandeur, while thoughtful enhancements were incorporated for today’s traveler,” Romaniello said. “We look forward to lifting the curtain on Waldorf Astoria New York as it makes

its grand reveal back to our beloved city and welcoming the world to create new memories at this iconic hotel.”

Following the multi-year transformation, the Waldorf Astoria New York will also offer 43,000 square feet of event space, a 30,000 square foot spa, fitness center, and an outdoor terrace “serving as an oasis within the bustling city,” Hilton said.

Dallas Convention Center Poised to Land FIFA’s International Broadcast Center

By [Jonathan Trager](#)

The Kay Bailey Hutchison Center in Dallas is on the verge of being selected to house FIFA’s International Broadcast Center (IBC) during the 2026 World Cup.

On December 2, the Dallas Sports Commission presented a plan to host the IBC to a Dallas City Council com-

mittee. The committee then moved to forward the proposal to the full council for a vote on December 11.

The proposed agreement with OVG360, which manages the city-owned convention center, would provide FIFA access to the facility from January 14, 2026, through August 24, 2026. It would serve as a media hub for about 2,000 journalists in summer

2026 and bring an estimated \$2 billion in economic impact to the region, according to city officials.

“We are confident that we have placed the best bid in front of FIFA and the City of Dallas, and look forward to having a positive outcome during the City Council vote next week,” said Monica Paul, Executive Director of the Dallas Sports Commission.

However, the agreement also requires the city to spend up to \$15 million to cover costs associated with getting the convention center ready for the IBC. These include fixing the convention center’s roof, installing cargo lifts, making sure the building has enough power, and other facility infrastructure changes, the *Dallas*

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Migrant Housing

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kistani Minister of Railways, said in the article.

In a November 30 post to social media platform X, Ramaswamy said: “A taxpayer-funded hotel for illegal migrants is owned by the Pakistani government which means NYC taxpayers are effectively paying a foreign government to house illegals in our own country. This is nuts.”

In the post, Ramaswamy erroneously described the asylum seekers and migrants taking shelter in the hotel as “illegal.” Asylum seekers coming to the United States are legally allowed to remain in the country while their application for protection from perse-

cution is being considered, according to the American Immigration Council, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting immigrant communities.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams at a press conference on December 3 said he agreed with Ramaswamy’s tweet, but he did not comment on the details of the contract.

“I think he was right in his tweet. It breaks my heart that we’re spending this much money following the law,” Adams said. “We’re [doing what] New York City requires us to do.”

Adams said when asylum seekers and migrants were first being bussed to the city, “we were getting 4,000 a week at one time. Eight thousand every two weeks, 16,000 a month” and the city was required to find housing

for them within a specific timeframe due to its status as a sanctuary city.

“We had to find space wherever we could. We were in emergency status,” Adams said.

Still, Adams said, the hotel bills for asylum seekers and migrants in New York City should not “fall on the backs of New York City taxpayers” due to its inherent inefficiency.

“I’m hoping he’s going to examine all of the inefficiencies that we’re seeing in government because I came in with the same energy and spirit,” Adams said. “We have been wasting taxpayers’ money for far too long and we need to stop wasting taxpayers’ money. His observation is the observation that I had. But we had no other choice but to do just that.”

When reached by email for comment about the Roosevelt Hotel and the conversation surrounding the city contracting with hotels to house migrants, Vijay Dandapani, President and CEO of the Hotel Association of New York City (HANYC), said the contract with the owners of the Roosevelt Hotel and the city “is a one-off contract that HANYC had and has no part in.”

Dandapani added that when establishing contracts “all contracts that HANYC is associated with were bid out and have provided considerable saving to the City of New York, as we are a non-profit engaged exclusively in the betterment of the entire hotel industry in the City and, therefore, do not look to profit from these contracts unlike other contractors.”

HOTS

HOTS Word of the Year... Oxford Dictionary released its 2024 word of the year on December 2: "Brain rot." The term is defined as "the supposed deterioration of a person's mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of material (now particularly online content) considered to be trivial or unchallenging." Oxford Languages, the parent company of the dictionary, said the annual word of the year is intended to highlight and reflect "our world during the last 12 months." Each year, the company collects six

terms to create a shortlist—this year's included "demure," "dynamic pricing," "lore," "romantasy," and "slop"—for the public to vote on. "Brain rot" speaks to one of the perceived dangers of virtual life, and how we are using our free time," said Casper Grathwohl, President of Oxford Languages. "It feels like a rightful next chapter in the cultural conversation about humanity and technology." Though it is growing in use to describe the dangers of our increasingly digital lives, "brain rot" was reportedly first used by Henry David Thoreau in 1854 in Walden. HOTS wonders what other changes digital living will bring to language!



HOTS A Mulder in the Making... For all you aspiring UFO hunters, there are opportunities to emulate The X Files Special Agent Fox Mulder in New Jersey. The Associated Press reports that the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) is currently looking into reports of "several mysterious nighttime drone flights" near the Picatinny Arsenal, a U.S. military research and manufacturing facility in Wharton, New Jersey



The Fairmont Washington, D.C., Georgetown held its 21st annual tree lighting ceremony on December 3, with more than 200 people attending the event. Guests brought hundreds of toys for Horton's Kids, a local nonprofit dedicated to helping youth in southeast D.C. prepare for academic success. Pictured here are Mark Huntley (back row in blue), General Manager and Regional Vice President, Fairmont Washington, D.C., Georgetown, and fellow hotel colleagues with some of the donations received.

that were first spotted on November 18—and they're asking for help from the public. The flying objects appear to be larger than drones typically used by hobbyists, and the FBI is seeking any videos or photos of the flights along

with relevant information. Since the appearance of the objects, the Federal Aviation Administration has imposed drone flight restrictions in the area while authorities investigate. Where's HOTS' tinfoil hat?

WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS CVBs AND HOTELS

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PCMA Emphasizing Sustainability at Convening Leaders

By Todd McElwee

Last year, PCMA's Convening Leaders in San Diego achieved Silver level in the EIC Sustainable Events Standards. This year, organizers are going for gold in Houston when the signature event touches down at the George R. Brown Convention Center from January 12–15.

"PCMA believes sustainability plays a central role in driving social and economic progress through business

events," the association said. "The environmental and social impacts of our events are key elements to economic progress and the future of the business events industry."

PCMA's commitment to sustainability is based on four pillars: commitment, progress, partnership

and exploration. Listed under progress, prioritized actions in Houston include that forks, knives and spoons are commercially compostable products made from 100% U.S. grown corn; materials such as furniture and household items

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"The environmental and social impacts of our events are key elements to economic progress and the future of the business events industry."

Rosen CEO

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programs, philanthropic endeavors for which Rosen was well known in the local community and the hospitality industry.

The programs provide children in the Tangelo Park and Parramore neighborhoods in Orlando with free preschool education, and following high school graduation, students from those neighborhoods are awarded college and vocational scholarships covering tuition, room and board, and books. Since Rosen launched the Tangelo Park Program in 1993, hundreds of students have received Rosen scholarships.

Santos was also instrumental in the creation of RosenCare, "a comprehensive healthcare program providing



Frank Santos

every associate amazing wellness benefits at affordable prices, with no

deductibles and 90% of all prescriptions, including insulin, available at zero cost" to Rosen Hotels & Resorts' associates, according to Rosen Hotels.

Outside of his work with Rosen Hotels, Santos received the 2023 Kenneth F. Murrah, Esq. Award as Central Florida's Outstanding Philanthropist, and he currently serves on the Board of Directors for both the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts as an Emeritus board member and the Diman Bengal Foundation. In the past, Santos has served on the boards of the Orlando Philharmonic, Canine Companions, The American Cancer Society, and Runway to Hope.

"I do not take this responsibility lightly, and I promise to continue the amazing work in our industry and in our community which Mr. Rosen started," Santos said.

NEWS

John Oros Retiring as Leader of Birmingham CVB

By Jonathan Tragere

J. John Oros Jr. is departing as President & CEO of the Greater Birmingham CVB after nine years in the position.

Oros took the helm of the organization in August 2015. A national search has been launched to find his successor, and he'll remain in the role until the leader is in place.

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve as the CEO of the Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau, and to champion this extraordinary destination," said Oros. "Birmingham's rich history, vibrant culture, and welcoming spirit have made it a true gem for visitors from around the world."

Oros came to Birmingham from the Memphis CVB in Tennessee, where he spent 22 years as Executive Vice President & COO and Sr. Vice President of Sales. During his tenure, tourism

generated a record \$2.52 billion in economic impact, according to the CVB.

Oros drove the development of a Tourism Master Plan and a Sports Tourism Master Plan for Birmingham and Jefferson County. He also partnered with the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center Authority to create two future studies, analyzing existing facilities and services in relation to other major regional competitors.

"I am deeply proud of what we have accomplished together," Oros said. "Over the last decade, our mission has been laser focused on driving economic growth through tourism—be it through an enhanced focus on international leisure visitation, international and domestic golf travel, bringing in major meetings and conventions, or from the success we've achieved in the becoming one of the nation's most sought after youth, college, and amateur sports destinations—the Greater Birmingham

region's reputation as a premier travel destination is stronger than ever."

Oros has served on the board of directors and foundation board of Destinations International, the Alabama Association of Destination Marketing Organizations, and The World Games 2022. He currently serves on the Alabama Tourism Department Advisory Board, the Alabama Sports Council, the Birmingham Bowl, and as Chairman of the 2025 World Police & Fire Games Local Host Committee.

A graduate of the University of Maryland, Oros was a 2017 and 2023 finalist for the "CEO of the Year Award" from the *Birmingham Business Journal*.

"Over the last decade, we have been steadfast in our focus on driving economic growth through tourism—be it through an enhanced focus on international and golf travel, bringing in major meetings and conventions, or the success we've achieved in the sports mar-



John Oros

ket—the Greater Birmingham region's reputation as a premier travel destination is stronger than ever," Oros said.

AHLA's Kevin Carey Appointed to SBA Council

By Jordan Bradley

Kevin Carey, Sr. Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA), has been appointed to the Small Business Lending Advisory Council, an advisory council for the Small Business Administration (SBA).

The advisory council was established in April this year. It aims to provide the SBA with insight, recommendations and guidance regarding facilitation of greater access and availability of capital for small business throughout the United States, "especially in underserved communities," according to the Federal Register.

Carey formerly served as the interim President and CEO of the AHLA from



Kevin Carey

March to November of this year. He is responsible for the entirety of AHLA's revenue generating operations, which include membership engagement, and partnership and business development.

"I'm honored to take on this new responsibility, and eager to help SBA identify and reduce lending barriers for everyone in our great industry," Carey said.

The Small Business Lending Advisory Council also provides feedback and input on potential changes to small business lending policies; cultivates public-private engagement, coopera-

tion and collaboration; developing or improving SBA "programs and services designed to address long-term capital

access gaps faced by small businesses and obstacles faced by the lenders that seek to support them," the Register said.

"Efficient and cost-effective access to capital is

an imperative for small business hoteliers across the country who want to make improvements to their properties, expand their operations to serve guests and their employees, and realize appreciation on their investment over

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"I'm honored to take on this new responsibility, and eager to help SBA identify and reduce lending barriers for everyone in our great industry."

Christmas Trees

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Tree Association (NCCTA) said. North Carolina Christmas trees make up 22% of U.S. Christmas tree production, and the state's industry is ranked second in the nation in the number of trees harvested and cash receipts. Oregon is the nation's top producer.

The *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) and PBS North Carolina both reported on the struggles of North Carolina's tree growers. The *Journal* noted the hurricane compounded issues with labor shortages, rising costs and competition from foreign made artificial trees.

"It's the hardest year ever in North Carolina agriculture," said Lee Wicker,

Deputy Director of the North Carolina Growers Association in the *Journal*. "The damage from Helene had a compounding effect. It wasn't one single thing, it was all these things that happened."

Waightstill Avery III told the *Journal* he lost a barn, an office, hauling trailers, dump trucks and 60,000 trees—one-third of the total at family-owned Trinity Tree Company-Avery Farms.

The nursery at Barr Evergreens flooded, destroying 200,000 seedlings valued at \$500,000.

Christmas trees have a very long growing cycle, making it impossible to affordably insure, said Rusty Barr, the second-generation owner.

North Carolina is one of the biggest users of the H-2A visa program for ag-

ricultural workers, the *Journal* noted. Barr typically employs and houses 35 workers from February until December and brings in another 20 for the October harvest. The hourly rate he pays is increasing to more than \$16 next year.

Barr supports the incoming Trump administration's pledge to crack down on illegal immigration but is nervous about the rhetoric around clamping down on legal immigration, the *Journal* said.

"We live in a community that's mostly older people and retired people, and the labor force goes from 700 workers to 2,500 workers at harvest," he said. "We couldn't do it without them."

A bright spot for North Carolina's

tree industry was the selection of a 20-foot Fraser fir as the White House Christmas tree from Cartner's Christmas Tree Farm in Newland.

"We are so excited to provide the White House Christmas Tree, and this year the honor means a little more because this provides a boost to the entire industry throughout the state," Sam Cartner Jr. told PBS's *Sci NC*. "Christmas tree farming is a way of life, and while Helene hit hard, we're coming back and we will be ready for harvest, [and] the trees will be heading down the mountain in time to help families celebrate the season."

NCCTA said the North Carolina Fraser fir has been chosen for the official White House Christmas tree 16 times, including the past two years

NEWS

Historic Hotels of America Announces Annual Awards of Excellence Winners

By Jordan Bradley

Historic Hotels of America held its annual Awards of Excellence Ceremony and Gala at the Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia, on November 21, to celebrate the country's finest historic hotels and their achievements in 2024.

More than 200 industry leaders, owners, general managers and hotel representatives attended the gala, celebrating the 19 awards distributed by Historic Hotels of America, including New Member of the Year, Best Social Media of a Historic Hotel, Sustainability Champion, and more.

"It is an honor to congratulate all of the 2024 Historic Hotels of America Annual Awards of Excellence winners," said Lawrence Horwitz, Executive Vice President of Historic Hotels of America and Historic Hotels Worldwide. "The winners are the finest historic hotels and hoteliers from across the United States. The historic hotels nominated include small historic inns, boutique hotels, lifestyle hotels, and resorts. They represent small towns to large cities to UNESCO World Heritage destinations."

According to the organization, more than 500 nominations were received this year.

In order to be nominated for an award, a hotel must be a member of the Historic Hotels of America—which requires its members be at least 50 years old—and have been designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark or is listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

As of July this year, Historic Hotels of America had approximately 300 member hotels, inns and resorts that

have "all faithfully maintained their authenticity, sense of place, and architectural integrity."

Nominated hotels must also be able to demonstrate how the hotel increased the recognition and celebration of the property's history, heritage, historic preservation, and its membership, "as well as how the hotel (through its ownership, leadership, and employees) contributes significantly as an industry leader in the designated award category," Historic Hotels of America said.

"We applaud the dedication and passion of the thousands of individuals working at these iconic and legendary hotels that keep the stories alive from the past and make staying at these historic hotels memorable experiences," Horwitz said. "The hotels on this list represent the very best spirit of perseverance and preservation of historic hotels. Through the many chapters these buildings have seen, it is the care of their staff, owners, and operators and the support of travelers that allow these stories to continue."

The winners of the 2024 Annual Awards of Excellence:

New Member of the Year—Hotel Iroquois, Mackinac Island, Michigan;

Best Social Media of a Historic Hotel—Historic Hotel Bethlehem, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania;

Sustainability Champion—Manua Kea Beach Hotel, Kohala Coast, Hawaii;

Best Small Historic Inn/Hotel (Under 75 Guestrooms)—The Inn at Leola Village, Leola, Pennsylvania;

Best Historic Hotel (76-200 Guestrooms)—The Jefferson Hotel, Richmond, Virginia;

Best Historic Hotel (201-400 Guestrooms)—Fairmont Century Plaza, Los



Larry Horwitz (left), Executive Vice President, Historic Hotels of America and Historic Hotels Worldwide, presented Gina Petrone (right), Hotel del Coronado, with the Historic Hotels of America Hotel Historian of the Year Award at the 2024 Awards of Excellence Ceremony and Gala held at the Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia on November 21.

Angeles, California;

Best Historic Hotel (Over 400 Guestrooms)—JW Marriott Savannah Plant Riverside District, Savannah, Georgia;

Best City Center Historic Hotel—The Willard InterContinental Washington, DC, Washington, D.C.;

Best Historic Resort, Colonial Williamsburg Resorts—Williamsburg Lodge, Autograph Collection and Colonial Houses and Williamsburg Inn, Williamsburg, Virginia;

Best Historic Restaurant—Garden Court at Palace Hotel, San Francisco, California;

Ambassador of the Year (25+ Years of Service)—Cindy White, The Omni Homestead Resort, Hot Springs, Virginia;

Hotel Historian of the Year—Gina Petrone, Hotel del Coronado, San Diego, California;

Legendary Family Historic Hoteliers of the Year—the Monteleone Family, Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, Louisiana;

Historic Hotelier of the Year—John Murtha, Omni Parker House, Boston, Massachusetts;

Lifetime Achievement Award—Molly and Robert D. Hardie, The Hermitage Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee; and Keswick Hall, Charlottesville, Virginia;

Steward of History and Historic Preservation Award—Kelly and Duane Roberts, The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, Riverside, California;

Legacy of Innovation & Inspiration Award—Philip F. Anschutz, The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, Colorado;

Historian of the Year—Anthea M. Hartig, Ph.D., Elizabeth MacMillan Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

CTA Injunction

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fully, the Court agreed and granted a preliminary injunction, giving small business owners a reprieve from this burdensome rule."

Enacted by Congress on January 1, 2021, the CTA included significant reforms to anti-money laundering laws and is intended to help prevent and combat money laundering, terrorist financing, corruption, and tax fraud, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said.

Small businesses need to file beneficial ownership information reports (BOIR) with the Department of the Treasury by January 1. Failure to submit by the deadline puts small business owners at risk of criminal penalties, imprisonment, and fines up

to \$10,000. The Chamber developed a CTA toolkit and provided updated information on the matter.

NFIB's lawsuit argues the CTA is unconstitutional in that it exceeds Congress's authority over the states, improperly compels speech, contradicts the right of anonymous association guaranteed by the First Amendment, and violates the Fourth Amendment by forcing the disclosure of private information. The association partnered with The Center for Individual Rights (CIR) and filed the lawsuit with the Texas Top Cop Shop, Data Comm for Business, Mustardseed Livestock, Russell Straayer, and Libertarian Party of Mississippi.

"Because NFIB and its nearly 300,000 members were a party to this case, the judge blocked enforcement of the BOI reporting requirements

nationwide," NFIB said. "This reaffirms the power that NFIB members hold when they stand up and speak out in protection of their rights."

NSBA filed a lawsuit against the Treasury Department in November 2022. On March 1, 2024, Judge Liles Burke of the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Alabama ruled in favor of NSBA's lawsuit over the constitutionality of the CTA. On September 27, 2024, NSBA's legal team argued in front of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Birmingham.

NSBA President & CEO Todd McCracken said: "NSBA has been leading the charge against the CTA for years. There is widespread confusion and massive concern among America's smallest businesses about the BOI reports, and we couldn't be more pleased that this court recognized that

confusion and sided with NSBA on the unconstitutionality of the CTA.

"While this injunction isn't permanent, this is a huge relief to the millions of small-business owners across the country who were facing a wildly complex regulatory regime, and fines that could exceed \$500 per DAY and up to two years of jail time."

McCracken added the association will continue to fight—both through its lawsuit, the first one filed—and in Congress. He said the various lawsuits working their way through the courts are critical to prevent a bad law from going into effect.

"No small-business owner should be spending time during the holidays worrying about a simple mistake landing them in jail—this injunction is a major win, but the battle continues," McCracken said.

NEWS

Missouri's Springfield CVB Rebrands as Visit Springfield, Missouri

By Jonathan Trager

The Springfield CVB in Missouri, which markets the state's third-largest city and the Ozarks, has rebranded to Visit Springfield, Missouri, effective November 22.

The rebranding effort includes a new logo designed by Revel Advertising that was unveiled at the Mayor's Tree Lighting Holiday Show on November 23.

"Our name clearly aligns with what we do: driving economic activity to our community by inviting others to visit our city of the Ozarks, showcasing all the area has to offer, and telling the stories of our region's people and places that make our city naturally

original," states a page explaining the rebrand on the organization's website.

Spearheaded by brand research firm Heart + Mind Strategies, the initiative incorporated feedback from community members, visitors, and potential visitors through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Research found that the essence of the southwestern Missouri destination can be captured in the simple statement: "Springfield, Missouri, is naturally original."

Mark Hecquet, President of Visit Springfield, Missouri, noted his team "has worked tirelessly with the community and our partners over the last year to ensure that our rebrand continues to elevate Springfield



as a top-tier destination, all while reflecting the positive growth and transformation this city continually experiences."

"From the moment we decided to rebrand, there has been an excitement around this project, not just from our internal team, but throughout the community as well," said Megan

Buchbinder, Marketing Director for Visit Springfield, Missouri. "We knew that if we got to the heart of why our community loves living here, then we would be able to develop a message and look that would capture us as a community at our core."

For more information, visit www.springfieldmo.org.

Dallas

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Business Journal reported.

"If I had a crystal ball, I would say

we are probably not going to spend that entire \$15 million," said Rosa Fleming, Director of Convention and Events Services for Dallas, according to the *Business Journal*. "I think it is just good planning on our part to make

sure that we've got the approval to set the funds aside so that there's not a slowdown if we do have to spend that entire amount."

Cities across the United States have been vying for the IBC since FIFA

selected the World Cup host sites in February. Dallas officials and World Cup organizers have already scheduled a press conference to take place after the full council meeting pending approval of the agreement.

Smiley Poswolsky Looks at Belonging During Holiday Showcase Keynote

By Todd McElwee

Sharing industry-shaping insights and practical tools to attract and retain top talent across generations, create a culture of belonging, and engage high-performing teams, Adam "Smiley" Poswolsky delivered "In Belonging and Human Connection in the Future of Work" at the Association Forum's Holiday Showcase. The event took place December 4–5 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

Poswolsky introduced the concept of belonging by sharing his introduction to the matter as a high school freshman in Boston. Although he wanted to be an athlete, he decided he was not big enough or tough enough for football or hockey. The school's soccer team was amongst the best



Smiley Poswolsky

in Massachusetts, so he went out for cross country even though he knew nothing about it.

Despite being the slowest member of the team, Poswolsky remained a positive force eventually becoming captain during his senior year. His coach gave him his nickname by telling him to stop smiling at practice.

"I had a role. I mattered. I belonged," he said.

Finding believers in who you are and what you do is critical, because not only do believers provide support and positive energy, but they also hold you accountable, Poswolsky said. He mentioned a friend who years ago consistently inquired if he'd made the career switch he longed for, and he eventually did.

Loneliness, connection and caring for others was also discussed. In terms of caring, Poswolsky said to "stop comparing and start caring." He shared four steps for belonging at work: being seen, connected, supported and proud.

Poswolsky has worked with Apple, Google, Verizon, JPMorgan Chase, and the U.S. Navy and is the bestselling author of four books including "The Workplace Belonging Toolkit." His TED talk has been viewed 2 million times, and he has delivered 600 keynotes in front of 250,000 people in 25 countries. Poswolsky work has been featured in 100 media outlets, including *Harvard Business Review*, *Wall St. Journal*, *Fast Company* and *New York Times*.

Sustainability

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will be diverted from the landfill and donated to the local Habitat for Humanity and Building Materials Reuse Warehouse; and working with Second Servings food rescue programs to help the community fight food insecurity.

Foam core signage at Convening Leaders was eliminated in favor of recyclable and reusable materials such as honeycomb substrate. PCMA is looking to reduce all printed signage

and move to digital through the convention center.

PCMA noted attendees will not find a single-use plastic water bottles at its vendors. Water refill stations are located throughout the convention center.

"Convening Leaders 2025 invites you to EXPLORE with the brightest minds and the most cutting-edge technologies, ENGAGE in a world where change is the only constant, and EVOLVE as you think about how sustainability is part of your career and leadership orbit," PCMA said.

PCMA partnered with Honeycomb

Strategies to manage the sustainability of the event. Find more information at conveningleaders.org.

SBA Council

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time," Carey said.

Before his tenure with the AHLA, which began in 2017, Carey served in senior leadership roles at the American Express Company, overseeing the strategy and revenue management of the Americas region as managing director.

Carey will bring a "deep understanding" of financial services and small business lending as a result of his career "inside and outside" hospitality, making him "exceptionally qualified" for the role, said Rosanna Maietta, President and CEO of AHLA.

"Kevin's expertise will be highly valued as SBA's new council works to address obstacles to small business loans, and his voice will help bring attention to the challenges faced by many of the more than 33,000 small business hotels in the U.S., which account for more than half of the nation's hotels," Maietta added.



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NEWS

Amal Clooney Joining Convening Leaders Speaking Lineup

By Todd McElwee

Amal Clooney, an international law and human rights lawyer and advocate, will deliver an address at Convening Leaders, PCMA's signature event scheduled for January 12–15 in Houston.


“Business events are about driving economic and social transformation. CL25 is the platform for experiments, pushing boundaries, expanding horizons, and inspiration while taking us out of our own comfort zones,” said Sherrif Karamat, CAE, President & CEO, PCMA and CEMA. “Ms. Clooney’s participation will encapsulate this theme, by focusing on social transformation, leaving us with actionable insights and the inspiration to leverage our own platforms—whether large or small—as agents of positive social change.”

Clooney represents clients before international courts, including the International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights. She frequently represents victims of mass atrocities, including genocide and sexual violence and has acted in many landmark human rights cases in recent years, PCMA said.

An adjunct professor at Columbia law school and a senior fellow at the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, Clooney has co-authored the textbooks *The Right to a Fair Trial in International Law* and *Freedom of Speech in International Law*, published by Oxford University Press. She and her husband George co-founded the Clooney Foundation for Justice, which provides free legal support to victims of human rights abuses in more than 40 countries.



Amal Clooney

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The President & CEO will shape the future of tourism in Evansville while overseeing Explore Evansville's affiliated non-profit entities:

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- Sports Complex Operations Corporation

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Scene at Association Forum's Holiday Showcase



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