



Centennial Olympic Park's Fountain of Rings in Atlanta has reopened following a \$2.5 million renovation funded by the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation. The upgraded fountain features enhanced LED lighting, a new fog system, and a curated musical program. Public shows begin this week. Credit: Georgia World Congress Center Authority

## Trump Postpones Tariffs That Could Impact Travel

### Many Canadians Less Likely to Visit United States

By Jonathan Trager

President Donald Trump on March 6 announced he has postponed 25% tariffs on most goods from Mexico and some imports from Canada for a month, measures that threatens to impact travel to the United States.

Imports from Mexico that comply with the 2020 USMCA trade pact would be excluded for a month from the tax, as would auto-related imports from Canada that comply with the trade deal.

"Most of the tariffs go on April the second," Trump said in the Oval Office before signing the orders. "Right now, we have some temporary ones and small ones, relatively small, although it's a lot of money having to do with Mexico and Canada."

Despite the delay, the imposition of tariffs are likely to have some impact on the travel industry.

Steven A. Carvell, professor of Finance at the S.C. Johnson College of Business at Cornell University, said business travel will likely take the

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## Wall Street Journal Op-ed Targets ASAE, "Nonprofits" in Tax Fight

By Todd McElwee

ASAE's efforts to protect its sector's tax-exempt status were targeted in a March 4 *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) op-ed.

Arguing lawmakers working to offset the cost of extending the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, could, "raise billions in new revenue by taxing the business income of special interests masquerading as nonprofits," Scott Hodge, a

tax and fiscal policy fellow at Arnold Ventures and President Emeritus of the Tax Foundation, takes aim at ASAE and its efforts via the Community Impact Coalition in "Nonprofits' Circle the Wagons to Fend Off Taxes." He highlights the billions in revenue raised by "nonprofits."

Chris Vest, CAE, Vice President, Corporate Communications & Public Relations, ASAE, told *USAE*: "ASAE is

working with its Community Impact Coalition to correct misperceptions shared in the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed but we can't discuss or elaborate on our strategy at this time."

He said there will be more to share in the near future.

Hodge shared that ASAE has a \$21 million annual budget and pays its CEO about \$1 million a year. He added the association is "positioned to

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## Treasury Won't Enforce BOI Fines or Penalties

By Todd McElwee

The Treasury Department announced on March 2 that with respect to the Corporate Transparency Act, it will not enforce any penalties or fines associated with the beneficial ownership (BOI) reporting rule under the existing regulatory deadlines.

The agency will not enforce any penalties or fines against U.S. citizens or domestic reporting companies or their beneficial owners after the forthcoming rule changes take effect.

The Association of Inter-

national Certified Professional Accountants (AICPA), National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and National Small Business Association (NSBA) all welcomed the news.

"This is a victory for common sense," said U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent. "Today's action is part of President Trump's bold agenda to unleash American prosperity by reining in burdensome regulations, in particular for small businesses that are the backbone of the American economy."

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## Schoolhouse Hotel to Launch Accessibility Lab

By Jordan Bradley

bility tech solutions.

The Schoolhouse Hotel, Trademark Collection by Wyndham, in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, is launching a first-of-its-kind Accessibility Lab through a collaboration with accessible travel association TravelAbility, and Samaritan Partners, a social impact venture fund.

Announced on February 26, the Accessibility Lab will act as a real-world "testing ground" for technology startups with inventions aimed at assistive technology where inventors can install, refine and improve their accessi-

"At The Schoolhouse Hotel, accessibility isn't an afterthought—it's at the heart of everything we do," said Ron Kuzon, owner of The Schoolhouse Hotel, Trademark Collection by Wyndham. "By serving as the living lab for this initiative, we're providing startups with an authentic hospitality environment to refine their innovations, ensuring that future travelers with disabilities experience true inclusivity and comfort. This initiative ensures that travelers with disabilities are part of the

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# NEWS

## AHLA Leader Advocates for Hospitality Industry to House Committee

By Jordan Bradley

The American Hotel and Lodging Association's (AHLA) President and CEO Rosanna Maietta testified before the U.S. House Committee on Education and Workforce on February 26 to advocate for the hospitality industry.

During her testimony, Maietta highlighted three key areas of focus for the association, urging the committee to expand the H-2B seasonal guest worker visa program, pass the Save Local Business Act, and maintain tax provisions that help hotel owners to reinvest in their businesses and in the hospitality workforce at large.

Maietta spoke on the hotel industry's role in contributing nearly \$900 billion to the country's GDP, noting that the industry supports one in every 25 jobs across the nation. She said it's an industry that perpetuates the American Dream, with many leaders having worked their way to higher positions.

"The most distinguished leaders in our industry, from general managers to owners to brand CEOs, can recall starting on property washing dishes, making beds, and helping guests," said Maietta. "In every corner of America, from city centers and interstate exits, to roadside attractions, and exotic destinations, hotels are more than just buildings—they are symbols of upward mobility and the success that comes with achieving the American Dream."

Maietta told the committee the hotel industry has made strides in post-pandemic staffing levels but is still 10% below pre-pandemic levels

with more than 200,000 vacant positions.

To that end, Maietta and AHLA are advocating for the expansion of the H-2B seasonal guest worker visa program. The H-2B program allows non-agricultural workers to live and work in the United States for up to three years. Most recently, on January 7, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) department approved an additional 20,716 H-2B visas for returning workers for the first half of fiscal year 2025 with start dates on or before March 31, according to the USCIS website.

Currently, Congress has set the cap for these visas at 66,000 per year. AHLA has been a strong advocate for extending this cap.

Maietta and the lodging association also support the passage of the Save Local Business Act, which seeks to more clearly define who is and is not considered a joint employer. This has strong implications in hospitality with the prevalence of franchise agreements.

Under the bill—which was first introduced in April 2023 and was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce the same month—someone would be considered a joint employer under federal labor law only if they are "directly, actually, and immediately (and not in a limited and routine manner)" exercising "significant control over the essential terms and conditions of employment," according to the bill's website.

Someone with that level of control over an employee would be involved in the hiring and discharging of em-



Rosanna Maietta addressed the House Committee on Education and Workforce on February 26.

ployees, responsible for directly determining rates of pay and benefits, conducting day-to-day supervision, assigning individual work schedules, positions and tasks, and deciding appropriate disciplinary action as needed.

In 2024, several hotel unions pushed for better pay and benefits for hotel workers, leading to a wage increase across the board.

Maietta noted that wages have increased more than 15% faster than the national average and employers have also increased benefits such as flexible scheduling, tuition reimbursement, and career advancement programs in order to attract and retain talent in the industry and close workforce gaps.

Speaking about tax provisions, Maietta said hoteliers were counting on Congress to extend the Tax Cuts

and Jobs Act of 2017, which extends tax deductions for small businesses, renews "bonus depreciation for capital business investments, and [preserves] the like-kind exchange to promote job growth and economic development."

"Without Congressional action, hoteliers face a massive tax hike that would devastate our industry," Maietta said in her testimony.

She concluded: "While we have made significant strides in rebuilding the workforce and providing new opportunities for career advancement, we continue to face economic pressures from inflation, workforce shortages, and overregulation. The hospitality sector remains committed to attracting and retaining talent, investing in workforce development, and creating good jobs for millions of Americans."

## Registration Opens for Destinations International 2025 Annual Convention

By Jonathan Trager

Destinations International (DI) announced on March 5 that registration is open for its Annual Convention, which will take place from July 9-11 in Chicago.

The event offers "an unparalleled opportunity for destination professionals to connect, collaborate and gain cutting-edge insights into the evolving landscape of destination marketing and management," according to the association.

Don Welsh, President & CEO of DI, said the 2025 Annual Convention "will highlight the indispensable role of destination organizations in fostering community engagement, sustainability and responsible tourism."

"As the industry continues to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, we look forward to welcoming professionals to Chicago from around the world for an event filled with impactful learning, networking and strategies for innovation, workforce development and destination stewardship," said Welsh. "We extend our gratitude to Choose Chicago and the entire local team for their partnership in making this a must-attend experience."

The convention will feature sessions focused on key issues impacting the industry, opportunities to connect with peers and industry thought leaders, a comprehensive approach to learning for professionals from des-

tinations of all sizes and disciplines, and relationship-driven networking with industry partners.

"We are thrilled to host Destinations International's 2025 Annual Convention in Chicago," said Richard Gamble, Interim President & CEO of Choose Chicago. "This event is an incredible opportunity for leaders in our industry to experience the energy, cultural diversity and economic vibrancy of our great city. We look forward to sharing Chicago's dynamic tourism offerings while fostering meaningful discussions that will shape the future of destination organizations worldwide."

DI is encouraging early registration to take advantage of special pricing

available for a limited time. Early bird pricing is available through April 3.

Prior to the opening of the convention, attendees can participate in add-on workshops being held on July 9. These include DI's Tools Symposium, Expedia Group Media Solutions Session: "Capturing Your Next Traveler When It Matters Most," and Civitas Funding Forum.

Alongside the convention, registration is also open for the Visitor Services Summit on July 9 and Summer CDME Courses from July 12-15, which offer strategic insights into destination management, advocacy, and leadership.

For more information or to register, visit [destinationsinternational.org](https://www.destinationsinternational.org).



# HOTS

*HOTS Vegetable Orchestra... HOTS recently learned about an 11-piece Austrian orchestra that plays exclusively vegetables. The aptly named Vegetable Orchestra from Vienna, Austria, was formed in 1999. The musical mishmash has befuddled and delighted audiences at 344 concerts over 27 years, UPI reported on March 5, and were recently awarded a Guinness World Record for the most concerts by a vegetable orchestra. The musicians carve fresh vegetables before every performance, "as their instruments only last for about six hours before starting to rot or losing*

*their shape," UPI reports. "It all started as a joke," said Matthias Meinharder, a founding member of the orchestra, in an interview with the BBC in 2019. The founding four members of the orchestra had signed up for a performance art festival in Vienna and began brainstorming what to perform while making soup together. They realized that the most difficult thing to play music on was probably a vegetable and started carving recorders out of carrots and mandolins out of leeks. Unwilling to be wasteful, the unused vegetables not destined for music-making are made into soup to be served at the concert. HOTS would bet money no one will beat these musicians for this Guinness World Record any time soon.*



*HOTS Lovable Ollid Llama... Whitetop, a llama that spends his days comforting chronically ill children, was crowned the oldest llama in captivity by the Guinness World Records, the Associated Press reported on March 5. At 27 years and more than 250 days old, Randleman, North Carolina-based Whitetop usurped Dalai Llama of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who was crowned the world's oldest llama in captivity in 2023. According to AP, Whitetop was donated to the Victory Junction camp in 2006, a camp*



**Annette Gregg, CMM, CEO of SITE & SITE Foundation, speaks during the SITE Global Conference 2025. The conference took place March 3-6 at the Hilton Tulum Riviera Maya All-Inclusive Resort in Mexico and attracted 557 attendees.**

*for children with chronic conditions like cancer, kidney and heart disease, cerebral palsy, Spina Bifida, and other neurological and physical disabilities. The camp was founded in honor of owner and race car driver Kyle Petty's son, Adam (also a race car driver), who was killed in practice race in 2000. According to the camp's barn director, Billie Davis, Whitetop is beloved for his*

*easy, sweet, and empathetic demeanor, often lying still while campers pet him. "He really gets to help campers come out of their shell when they interact with him," Davis said. "He can be kind of intimidating at first, but once they come over to him and love on him and pet on him, they just realize how sweet he is." HOTS is delighted to learn of a non-spitting llama.*

WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS, CYBS AND HOTELS

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## Destinations International Hosts First Global Leaders Forum

By Jonathan Trager

Destinations International (DI) hosted its inaugural Global Leaders Forum in Dublin, Ireland, from February 11-13, attracting more than 100 participants such as destination leaders from Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific, and other regions.

"With issues such as overtourism and sustainable travel high on the agenda, there is a growing responsibility placed on destination organiza-

tions as brand stewards and catalysts in their communities," DI noted. "The importance of balancing the economic and social benefits of tourism to ensure they benefit visitors and residents alike has never been higher."

"Travel has never been more important, with sustainability and responsible tourism becoming top priorities globally," said Don Welsh, President & CEO of DI. "Destinations International is pleased by our growing number of European destinations

joining as members and was pleased by the strong interest and outcomes of our first Global Leaders Forum."

Speakers included Greg Clark, CBE, FAcSS, an urbanist and advisor on city development; Adrian Cooper, CEO of Oxford Economics; and industry titans in the aviation sector: Michael O'Leary (CEO, Ryanair), Lynne Embleton (CEO, Aer Lingus) and Colm Lacy (CCO, British Airways).

The event explored a range of top-  
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## BOI Fines

*continued from page 1*

Treasury will issue proposed rulemaking to "narrow the scope of the rule to foreign reporting companies only," the agency said.

AICPA and state CPA societies wrote numerous letters to Congress and FinCEN, urging a delay in the reporting deadline.

"The AICPA will continue monitoring this very closely," Melanie Lauridsen, Vice President-Tax Policy & Advocacy, said in a LinkedIn post.

Both NFIB and NSBA have taken action against CTA in federal court.

"NFIB greatly appreciates President Trump's strong support in this important effort to protect America's Small Business owners from what he

correctly labeled an 'outrageous and invasive' Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) reporting requirement," said Adam Temple, NFIB Senior Vice President for Advocacy. "NFIB will continue to work with Congress to fight for Congressional repeal of the underlying statute and regulations that intrude into the privacy of small businesses and create a vast new government database on Americans. We thank President Trump and his administration for their willingness to stand up for small businesses and address the Beneficial Ownership Information reporting rule."

Todd McCracken, President & CEO, NSBA, said: "Today is a good day for small business. I applaud the administration for seeing this law for what it is: a massive burden on America's job creators which will do next to nothing

to actually stop money-laundering. We have been beating the drum on this flawed concept for three administrations now, and I'm glad our message has finally gotten through."

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.

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USAE (USPS 702-930, ISSN 0894-8194) is published weekly except the week of Christmas Day by CustomNEWS, Inc. Subscription rate is \$175/year; add \$65 in Canada and Mexico. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to USAE, 6809 Delaware Street, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

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# NEWS

## HSMAI Foundation Releases Report on AI in Hospitality Talent Acquisition

By Jordan Bradley

The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) Foundation released a report at the end of February delving into the impacts of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on talent management for hospitality sales, marketing and revenue management, finding that while organizations are cautious about implementation, there is much in the way of opportunity with the technology.

“We are pleased to release the State of Generative AI in Talent Management report, showcasing how generative AI is reshaping recruitment, retention, and professional development in hotel sales, marketing, and revenue management,” said Brian Hicks, HSMAI Executive Director, and Lori Kiel, HSMAI Foundation Chair, in a joint statement. “This transformative technology is

equipping teams with tools to attract top talent, enhance skills, and foster long-term career growth.”

The HSMAI Foundation’s report anticipates that 2025 will see more AI integration due to the establishment of governance frameworks, expanded AI literacy programs, and more focus on using technology in ways aligned to “human-centric hospitality principles.”

The report was authored by Michael J. Goldrich, Founder and Chief Advisor of Vivander Advisers, which specializes in generative AI education and digital transformation strategies.

Overall, the report found that most organizations “are still experimenting” with ways to use AI and that in 2024 industry professionals were “cautious” about implementation of the technology.

“This cautious approach reflects concerns over data privacy, algorithmic

bias, and the absence of tailored frameworks for hospitality,” the report states.

But in recruitment, adoption of generative AI is being considered for streamlining the hiring process by more readily identifying strong candidates, writing job descriptions more quickly, and automating routine hiring processes, according to the report.

When it comes to professional development, HSMAI Foundation’s report found that organizations are beginning to embrace workshops and hands-on training centered on AI for leaders and team members, helping employees to “build consistent, future-ready skills while organizations remain” adaptable and competitive in today’s hospitality market.

Through these learning opportunities, the report found that “reverse mentoring”—when a younger employee helps guide a senior employ-

ee—“creates meaningful changes in workplace relationships,” thereby making the organization stronger.

The report also identified AI’s potential to enhance talent retention by automating repetitive tasks thereby “allowing employees to focus on strategic, fulfilling work that promotes creativity and innovation,” the HSMAI Foundation said, and leading to greater employee satisfaction.

“By reducing toil and enhancing meaningful work, generative AI redefines the employee experience, ensuring teams stay engaged, fulfilled, and dedicated to success,” according to the report. “Hotels that effectively address toil through AI and process improvements will experience better retention, enhanced innovation, and stronger business outcomes.”

To view the full report, visit [global.hsm.ai.org/research](https://global.hsm.ai.org/research).

## ASAE’s Legislative Fly In Coming to D.C.

By Todd McElwee

The association industry is returning to the nation’s capital when ASAE hosts its annual Legislative Fly In, March 25–26. Education, networking and a day of advocacy on Capitol Hill are on tap.

ASAE noted Fly In attendees will inform Congressional staff about how associations build up America’s economy, champion policies to promote a robust, inclusive workforce and learn

principles in association advocacy and tips to build successful policy programs.

Education is on the agenda for March 25.

Fly In priorities include threats to the sector’s tax-exempt status and the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow’s Workforce Act. Preparing for significant tax legislation, ASAE launched the Community Impact Coalition in January. Organizers noted the unified initiative is dedicated to educating the

119th Congress about the social and economic benefits of associations, charities, and other tax-exempt organizations. Ali Bedford, Vice President, Integer; and Kyle Hayes, Sr. Director, Public Policy, ASAE, will facilitate session on the matter.

The Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow’s Workforce Act permits beneficiaries of 529 savings accounts to use their account funds to cover costs associated with workforce training and both obtaining and maintaining

high-quality postsecondary credentials, such as professional certifications and occupational licenses. ASAE has long championed the initiative with Hayes and Jake Kohn, Sr. Policy Advisor, Nelson Mullins, discussing the topic.

March 26 will consist of meetings on Capitol Hill.

“Visit your members of Congress on Capitol Hill to demonstrate the power of associations and share the Power of

*Please turn to page 6*

## Schoolhouse Hotel

*continued from page 1*

innovation process, shaping solutions that truly meet their needs.”

Kuzon told *USAE* the Accessibility Lab will work with Hero Hinge, a door hinge that automatically opens for someone with a fob, as its first test product. To start, the hinge will be installed on three guest room doors in the 30-room property.

The Hero Hinge presented during the 2024 TravelAbility Conference in San Francisco, where Kuzon first learned of the device, he said.

For tech startups and inventors, the Accessibility Lab offers a unique opportunity to receive user feedback before going to market. Schoolhouse Hotel representatives said there are several things to consider when installing adaptive technologies. The property’s established motion-activated bathroom doors, for example, are frequently turned off by guests “because the motor does make a little bit of noise,” and occasionally while

using the facilities, movement can trigger the door to open, the representative said.

The Lab aims to help startups answer questions related to user experience and functionality that give inventors a better sense of the real-world application of their products. Questions focus on whether the assistive tech fills a need gap, how useful the product is, whether it’s well-received and practical from a user’s perspective, how much or little it benefits the business adopting the technology, and whether it’s cost-effective.

The Schoolhouse Hotel is a repurposed school that opened in June 2022 as the first fully accessible boutique hotel in the United States. On site, the property also boasts a restaurant, ballroom, and rooftop bar—all of which are accessible.

In conjunction with the Accessibility Lab announcement, the trio announced it’s in the process of expanding the property with more lodging, a spa, micro-distillery, and retail space which will also be used as part of the Accessibility Lab’s testing areas.



The Schoolhouse Hotel, Trademark Collection by Wyndham, a fully accessible hotel, launches the Accessibility Lab to test adaptive technologies.

According to Kuzon, details of the expansion plans for the property’s community village are still in the works, but the Schoolhouse Hotel is working on a partnership with Barnwood Builders’ Mark Bowe to create a Barnwood Village, consisting of

40–50 luxury accessible cabins made of salvaged barn and log cabin wood. Kuzon said he anticipates construction to begin this summer.

For more information or to submit a product, visit [samaritanpartners.com/the-lab](https://samaritanpartners.com/the-lab).



# NEWS

## AHLA Foundation Announces Kevin Carey as New President and CEO

By [Jordan Bradley](#)

The American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) Foundation has appointed Kevin Carey to the role of President and CEO, AHLA announced on March 3.

Carey is currently Chief Operating Officer of AHLA and acted as interim CEO prior to Rosanna Maietta's appointment to the position in November 2024. He succeeds Anna Blue in the role.

Carey's appointment is effective immediately. AHLA said he will remain COO for AHLA as well.

"I am thrilled to take on this new role and continue the important work of the AHLA Foundation," said Carey. "The Foundation plays a critical role in securing the future of our industry by developing its people, creating communities underpinned by access and opportunity, and by raising awareness of the many pathways to rewarding

hospitality careers."

Prior to joining AHLA in 2017, Carey spent 25 years at American Express, serving in senior roles. Carey is also a member of the Industry Advisory Board for the Penn State School of Hospitality Management.

"Now more than ever, the Foundation's programs and initiatives will play a vital role in advancing the hospitality industry and amplifying opportunities for its people," said Rosanna Maietta, President and CEO of AHLA. "Kevin is one of the industry's most respected and seasoned leaders and a strong advocate of the AHLA Foundation and its team. I couldn't think of a better person to lead the Foundation given his experience in designing and securing funding support for broad-based industry initiatives."

Blue held the position of President of the Foundation since January 2023 and announced her departure this

February, AHLA said.

Blue did not specify her next role but said in a March 4 LinkedIn post that "it has been the honor of a lifetime to do this work."

She continued: "Leading the Foundation has been more than just a job; it has been a true privilege, and a chance to create real impact in the lives of real people."

During Blue's tenure, the Foundation expanded its team "and enhanced visibility and impact of programs," including ForWard, an initiative that advances women in hospitality, AHLA said.

Blue also helped to grow the Foundation's annual fundraiser, Night of A Thousand Stars, which raised on January 27 more than \$1 million to support the organization's initiatives and Los Angeles wildfire relief.

"I look forward to working with our dedicated team to expand our collective impact, broaden industry engagement,



Kevin Carey

and develop programs that welcome and support both current and future hospitality professionals," Carey said.

## Research Shows Black Travel Market Worth \$145 Billion

By [Todd McElwee](#)

New research shows the Black travel market is worth \$145 billion, MMGY Travel Intelligence—in partnership with Black Travel Alliance and the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP)—announced at the end of February.

Safety and a welcoming atmosphere continue to dominate the priority list for the growing demographic, with 79% citing these factors as highly influential in their travel decisions.

"Creating memories, relaxing and exploring new destinations while feeling safe are paramount for today's Black

travelers," said Simon Moriarty, Vice President of Research & Analytics for MMGY Travel Intelligence. "By offering actionable insights, these studies empower travel businesses to develop tailored strategies and solutions that resonate with the needs of each audience, driving both personalization and profitability."

Research was broken down into multiple sections. For the meetings section of the study, MMGY and NCBMP engaged 200 members of the association in January. Findings from that segment include:

- The Black meeting professional plans an average of 5.5 meetings per year, down from 7.5 in 2020. This sug-

gests that many meetings are being consolidated or held virtually.

- Typical meetings involve 501–2,000 peak room nights. Average annual meetings spend exceeded \$2 million for respondents in 2024, with 7% reporting expenditures over \$5 million.

- Significantly more meetings with 100 or fewer room nights were planned in 2024 (19%) when compared to 2020 (12%), indicating that smaller, more personal meetings have become increasingly popular over the past five years.

Additional findings indicate the types of meetings planned, off-site activities, destinations of choice, key challenges facing their profession and the demo-

graphics of the planners.

"Once again, the data is clear: Black people do travel, and our buying power does impact communities," said Jason Dunn, CEO, NCBMP. "This should no longer be a question but a fact and a speaking point in all boardrooms, particularly in this climate of indecisiveness."

The study also includes a national survey of 2,000 Black leisure travelers and intelligence from DK Shifflet's TRAVEL PERFORMANCE/MonitorSM.

The study is available for purchase with proceeds from sales benefiting BTA and NCBMP. Find more information at [mmgyintel.com](http://mmgyintel.com).

## Checking Inn

**Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City** in New Jersey recognized its record-breaking 2024 by awarding \$10 million in bonuses to both its union and non-union employees on February 27 at a company town hall event.

"2024 was indeed a record-breaking year in many categories for Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City, and we want to recognize the hard work of team members who made it all possible," said Jim Allen, Chairman of Hard Rock International, at the event. "We set records for overall profit, market share, hotel occupancy, slot win and table games drop. We also had a record breaking year for conventions, food and beverage, entertainment, spa and hotel room sales."

At the event, Hard Rock gave away \$100,000 in cash and prizes to attending team members in addition to

the bonuses.

Covington, Kentucky-based **Commonwealth Hotels** announced the grand opening of its newest property, the DoubleTree by Hilton in Manhattan, Kansas, on March 3 following a multi-million renovation and conversion.

"We are thrilled to bring the DoubleTree by Hilton experience to Manhattan," said Jennifer Porter, President of Commonwealth Hotels. "This transformation represents our commitment to delivering exceptional guest experiences, blending comfort, style, and our signature warm chocolate chip cookie welcome."

The 197-room-and-suite property offers guests an expanded meeting and event space, onsite dining at the Boulevard Grill, renovated fitness and wellness facilities, and upgraded internet and in-room entertainment.

The **Four Season Resort Maui** at Wailea in Hawaii will host "distinctive experiences" at its Adult Pool inspired by the HBO Original Series *The White Lotus* from March 14 to May 16, the property announced on March 3.

The experience will offer guests specialty cocktails and menu inspired by the series and designed by Executive Chef Ryan Schelling; the Lotus Release Ritual, a curated poolside spa treatment; and The White Lotus Bar: Full Moon Party, which celebrates the full moon with a DJ, themed cocktails and surprises inspired by memorable moments from the show.

The luxury resort's Adult Pool was a central filming location from the first season of "The White Lotus."

For more information, visit [fourseasons.com/maui](http://fourseasons.com/maui).

The **International Luxury Hotel**

**Association** (ILHA) announced a new partnership with **Matrix Fitness** on February 27 designed to elevate wellness in the luxury hospitality sector. As part of the collaboration, Matrix Fitness will offer insights and best practices with hospitality professionals and will highlight emerging fitness trends, technology integration, and wellness initiatives for ILHA members, the association said.

"Matrix Fitness's leadership in premium wellness technology makes them an ideal partner for ILHA," said Barak Hirschowitz, President of ILHA. "Their solutions empower luxury hotels to deliver personalized, holistic experiences that resonate with today's discerning travelers. This collaboration amplifies our shared vision of integrating wellness as a cornerstone of modern luxury."

# NEWS

## Around Associations

### U.S. Chamber and Nearly 500 Business Groups Urge Congress to Permanently Extend Pro-Growth Tax Reforms...

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently led 492 state and local chambers of commerce and national trade associations—representing all 50 states—in calling on Congress to adopt a current-policy baseline in its budget resolution to extend the temporary provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) and deliver permanent tax relief to American families and employers.

“As lawmakers contemplate advancing tax reform legislation through budget reconciliation this year, the importance of adopting the appropriate budget baseline cannot be overstated. We believe it is imperative that Congress adopt a current-policy baseline,” wrote the cosigners. “Adopting a current-policy baseline would avoid a \$4 trillion dollar tax increase on American families and employers by creating a pathway for Congress to make the TCJA permanent. Doing so would provide businesses the certainty and stability they need to make the long-term investments that drive growth, accelerate productivity, and increase prosperity across all segments of the economy.”

The Chamber said the letter is the latest effort in its education and advocacy campaign to maintain a pro-growth tax code that fosters a robust economy and benefits all Americans. Through data, policy recommendations, polling, first-hand business stories, in-district roundtables with members of Congress, and research, the Chamber is urging lawmakers to promote economic growth and prevent tax increases as a top priority this year.

Find the complete letter at [uschamber.com](https://uschamber.com).

**SITE Launches Inaugural C-Suite Agency Summit at Tulum Global Conference...** SITE debuted its C-Suite Agency Summit during the SITE Global Conference, hosted in

Tulum, Mexico from March 3–6.

Annette Gregg, SITE CEO, said: “The launch of the C-Suite Agency Summit marks a pivotal moment for our industry at a time of extraordinary geopolitical change. By uniting the top leaders in incentive travel under one roof, we’re not only setting a new standard for collaboration and innovation but also creating a dynamic forum where groundbreaking ideas can take shape. This initiative underscores our commitment to driving the future of incentive travel and empowering our community to build and bridge cultures in ways that were previously unimaginable.”

Designed as an invite-only event, the Summit brings together senior leadership from North America’s top incentive travel agencies to connect, learn, and shape the future of the industry.

The session includes, tailored education, VIP experiences, accommodations at the Hilton Tulum Riviera Maya All-Inclusive Resort and premium networking events.

Steve O’Malley, Chief Operating Officer of Business Event Solutions for Maritz, said: “As a participant, I’m excited by the opportunity to engage with industry peers in such an intimate setting. The C-Suite Agency Summit is more than just a meeting — it’s a convergence of seasoned leaders dedicated to redefining our business landscape, supporting SITE’s mission. I’m confident that the insights and connections we forge here will propel our industry into its next era of innovation.”

More information is available at [siteglobal.com](https://siteglobal.com).

**PCMA New England Welcoming CEMA Spark Lab Boston...** On March 24, a CEMA Spark Lab will be held at the Boston Marriott Long Wharf.

“The future of events is here!” the chapter said. “Supercharge your productivity, boost your value, and wow your audiences with Spark, the AI tool for and by event professionals.”

Register at [newengland.pcma.org](https://newengland.pcma.org).

## WSJ Op-ed

*continued from page 1*

invest \$1M in strategic advocacy and communications counsel” while also noting general coalition membership runs \$5,000 with steering committee membership costing \$10,000 and \$25,000 earning executive-leadership level status.

“That membership fee isn’t much if your goal is to avoid paying taxes on tens of millions of dollars of business-like income,” he wrote.

Hodge said IRS data showed 501(c)(6) organizations reported nearly \$54 billion in total revenue in 2021 and \$3.3 billion in tax-exempt profits after deducting expenses. He discussed what revenue is exempt from tax and what is taxable and shared that ASAE reported \$10.4 million in income from hosting meetings, but only \$648,526 of that was potentially taxable as unrelated to its mission.

“If ASAE were a for-profit company, all \$10.4 million would be subject to tax,” he wrote.

Hodge also shared revenue data from the PGA Tour Inc., which reported \$1.8 billion in revenue in 2023 and paid its commissioner \$18.8 million that year, U.S. Tennis Association,

and other sports outfits stating, “None seem to operate in a nonprofit manner.” He juxtaposed them with the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball, saying they “gave up their 501(c)(6) status years ago and seem to be thriving as commercial businesses.”

Hodge came back to ASAE reporting it argues that taxing the business income of these organizations somehow impinges on their “ability to exercise their First Amendment rights to freedom of religion and association.”

“How so? The 21% corporate tax rate hasn’t prevented the owners and employees of more than 1.5 million U.S. corporations from assembling, and some business leaders are exercising the Free Exercise rights by praying that President Trump delivers on his pledge to lower the corporate tax rate to 15%,” he wrote.

Find the complete column at [wsj.com](https://www.wsj.com).

## ASAE’s Fly In

*continued from page 4*

Associations message,” ASAE said. “Our success relies on the visits we make to Congressional offices to share our collective message. Visits make it much more likely that our elected officials will stand up for us when we need them most!”

Sentinel Awards are also presented during the event. They are bestowed to Congressional leaders who championed the cause of associations.

Find more information at [asae-center.org](https://asae-center.org).

## DI Forum

*continued from page 3*

ics, including the future of aviation, the importance of accessible tourism, the critical role of community engagement in sustainable travel, and the growing importance of sporting and business events in advancing and developing vibrant destinations. Overtourism was a topic of discussion, including insights on leveraging responsible tourism to mitigate the impact on high-demand destinations.



At the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City Town Hall event, General Manager Mike Sampson (left) and President George Goldhoff (right) congratulate Hard Rock Atlantic City team members on receiving \$10 million in bonuses. Credit: Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City

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# NEWS

## CVB Update

**Visit Carlsbad** on March 4 announced the launch of its spring campaign “Carlsbad Blooms Into Spring,” ushering in the season in the Southern California beach town while also celebrating its vibrant artistic roots.

Award-winning hotels and businesses across the destination have created special springtime offerings, packages, and specials aimed to celebrate Spring in a town renowned for its signature Flower Fields at Carlsbad Ranch, which officially kicked off its season on March 1.

The campaign will run through May 31 and includes myriad offerings created to celebrate the 55 acres of Giant Tecolote Ranunculus flowers that make up The Flower Fields at Carlsbad Ranch and the Southern California sunshine that defines springtime on the West Coast.

“Carlsbad Blooms Into Spring” celebrates the vibrant beauty of Carlsbad and brings our hotels and businesses together to offer unique seasonal experiences for visitors,” said Kim Sidoriak, President & CEO of Visit Carlsbad. “Carlsbad’s artistic community plays an integral role in the essence of this season, with local artists and creators drawing inspiration from the city’s natural beauty to craft experiences that uplift and connect us.”

For more information on the campaign, go to [visitcarlsbad.com/bloomsintospring](https://visitcarlsbad.com/bloomsintospring).

**Visit Tampa Bay** President & CEO Santiago C. Corrada was named to the U.S. Travel Association’s Executive Board for a two-year term, the association has announced.

The U.S. Travel Association represents the \$2.8 trillion travel industry—working to increase travel

to and within the U.S. As a member of the Executive Board, Santiago will contribute to advancing the association’s mission to shape, support and advocate for the future of travel.

“I’m honored to be selected to serve this industry which means so much to so many,” said Corrada. “I’m looking forward to working with U.S. Travel’s National Chair, Bill Hornbuckle, and the rest of the executive board to advocate and make meaningful impact for the multitude of tourism and hospitality professionals who make America’s travel industry such an important part of our nation’s economic well-being.”

Corrada has been the President and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay since May 2013. Before being named to the Executive Board, Corrada served on the U.S. Travel Association’s Board of Delegates for the previous 11 years. Corrada also served as the



Santiago Corrada

Chairman of Destination Florida in 2024.

## Tariffs

continued from page 1

biggest hit first.

“This is going to have multiple rounds of impacts, and we are going to see business travel, group travel, corporate travel, decline as a result of it,” Carvell told *USA Today*. “There will be less cross-border travel and less demand for hotel room nights because of that. Group travel will

be down because of that, meetings maybe.”

Carvell added it’s unlikely that tariffs will have a “noticeable, immediate impact” on hotel room prices or airfares but they still could have longer-term impacts.

News of the tariffs—as well as repeated Trump comments about annexing Canada as the 51st state—have offended many Canadians.

“The Trump Administration’s recent attacks on its northern neigh-

bor have been met with confusion, frustration, and anger by many Canadians, some of whom are now abandoning their trips south and boycotting travel to the U.S. in protest,” according to an NPR report.

Catherine Prather, President of the U.S.-based National Tour Association, said she has heard reports from “dozens” of members about Canadian travelers cancelling tours to the United States, according to NPR.

A recent poll by the market research firm Leger found that nearly half of those surveyed said they were less likely to travel to the United States this year and are more likely to travel domestically instead.

Canadians are the largest group of foreign visitors to the United States. The U.S. Travel Association has estimated that even a 10% reduction in Canadian visitation could cost the U.S. economy \$2.1 billion and 14,000 jobs.

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