



On June 4, Hilton announced a partnership with GMR Group-led Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) to open hotels under the Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts and Hilton Hotels & Resorts brands. The hotels will be located at GMR Aerocity, New Delhi. Shown here (holding packets) are Christopher J. Nassetta, CEO of Hilton Worldwide; and Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao, Founder Chairman of the GMR Group.

Trump Implements Travel Ban for Citizens of 12 Countries

*Seven Other Countries
Have Restricted Access*

By Jonathan Trager

Citing national security concerns, President Donald Trump has signed a proclamation banning citizens from 12 countries from entering the United States while restricting access for citizens from seven others. The new policy takes effect on June 9.

Announced on June 4, the ban applies to citizens of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. The heightened restrictions apply to people from Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela who are outside of America and don't hold a valid visa.

The goal of the new policy is to "protect its citizens from aliens who intend to commit terrorist attacks, threaten our national security, espouse hateful ideology, or otherwise exploit the immigration laws for malevolent purposes," the administration said.

"President Trump is fulfilling his

Please turn to page 4

L.A. Tourism Industry Split on Wage Ordinance

By Jordan Bradley

A group of businesses, airlines and hotels in the Los Angeles International Airport have formed the Los Angeles Alliance for Tourism, Jobs and Progress in an effort to overturn the divisive Olympic Wage Ordinance through a citywide vote.

On May 14, the Los Angeles City Council passed the Olympic Wage Ordinance, which would gradually increase the tourism worker minimum

wage to \$30 an hour by 2028.

The ordinance is currently set to take effect this July, instituting the wage increase for hotel and airport workers to begin at \$22.50. The ordinance also requires that airport and hotel businesses provide an hourly healthcare payment starting at \$7.65 beginning in July for airport businesses and in 2026 for hotels.

In response, the Alliance filed paperwork on May 29 to force a citywide vote on the ordinance. The group now

has until June 30 to gather 93,000 signatures from registered voters in the city to qualify the measure for the June 2026 ballot.

Hotel industry leaders in the city argue that the ordinance will hurt the city financially.

Phil Singer, a spokesperson for the Alliance, told the *Los Angeles Times* the wage increase "threatens revenue Los Angeles urgently needs."

"Small businesses will be forced to

Please turn to page 5

National Association of the Deaf Sues White House *Calls Again for Sign Language Interpreters at Briefings*

By Todd McElwee

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is once again suing the White House.

Late last month, NAD filed lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., to compel the Administration to immediately resume providing American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters during broadcasts of press briefings to make them accessible to deaf and hard of hearing people. The practice ended in January 2025.

The association sued the White House for access to press briefings previously. In September 2020, the association obtained a court ruling ordering the White House provide interpreters for all COVID-19-related briefings.

Since that settlement, the White House provided ASL interpreters, including Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs), for all public briefings, press conferences, and related events by the President, the Vice President,

Please turn to page 5

Inside



Page 3

Page 2
Marriott Opens First StudioRes
Hotel

Page 4
NoMad Brand to Make Michigan
Debut in Detroit's Central Station

Page 5
SITE Opens Crystal Awards
Nominations

Page 6
Nashville's Music City Center
Releases Expansion Study Results

Mario Bass Tapped to Lead Visit San Antonio

By Jonathan Trager

Mario J. Bass, a 30-year veteran of the tourism and hospitality industry, became President & CEO of Visit San Antonio on June 2.

The San Antonio native had served as the interim head of the organization since April. Bass served as Executive Vice President & Chief Strategy Officer since returning to the organization in July 2024, having previously held the role of Chief Sales Officer.

Bass succeeds former Visit San Antonio leader Marc Anderson, who

decided not to renew his contract earlier this year.

"I'm grateful to the Board for their confidence in my vision to prioritize San Antonio's greatest asset—our people—as we continue to elevate our home as a premier destination for both leisure and meetings," said Bass. "San Antonio presents an exceptional blend of culture, history, cuisine, affordability, diverse accommodations and state-of-the-art convention options. Combined with our warm, welcoming community, the Alamo City

Please turn to page 3

NEWS

Marriott Opens First StudioRes Hotel

By Jordan Bradley

Marriott International announced the opening of the first StudioRes hotel in Fort Myers, Florida, on June 2, marking the new brand's debut.

The 124-room StudioRes Fort Myers offers guests studio-style rooms complete with a kitchen that includes a stovetop, microwave and full-sized refrigerator. StudioRes properties also provide communal spaces, outdoor patios, fitness centers, Wi-Fi and casual workspaces.

The StudioRes Fort Myers was developed by longtime Marriott partners Concord Hospitality and Whitman Peterson and is nearby the Southwest Florida International Airport.

"Concord Hospitality's longstanding relationship with Marriott has been defined by strategic alignment, mutual trust and a shared commitment to quality," said Mark Laport, President & CEO of Concord Hospitality. "Our role in supporting the shaping of Marriott's next-generation hotel prototypes speaks to

the strength of that relationship. The grand opening of the first-ever StudioRes property is a significant milestone—not only for Marriott, but for Concord as we continue to lead in developing high-performing, scalable hospitality assets that meet the evolving needs of today's extended-stay traveler and deliver long-term value for our investment partners."

Marriott announced the StudioRes brand in 2023, marking Marriott's entry into the midscale extended stay market. All StudioRes properties will participate in Marriott's loyalty program, Marriott Bonvoy, the company said.

"Since unveiling StudioRes only two years ago, we have been thrilled by the reception among owners and franchisees, and we are proud to celebrate this milestone with Concord Hospitality and Whitman Peterson," said Leeny Oberg, CFO and EVP of Development at Marriott.

Marriott said it anticipates more than 40 StudioRes properties throughout the United States and Canada will be open by the end of



The StudioRes Fort Myers is the first StudioRes property to open, Marriott announced on June 3.

2027.

"We designed StudioRes to provide terrific value for customers with an innovative room design and highly efficient operating model for long-term stays," Oberg said. "The fast adoption of the brand also demonstrates

the power of the Marriott Bonvoy ecosystem and the importance of our strong developer relationships, while underscoring our continued commitment to providing lodging options for every traveler, price point and trip purpose."

MPI Promoting Social Consciousness at WEC in St. Louis

By Todd McElwee

MPI continues to be conscious of the social and environmental impact of its World Education Congress (WEC). From June 18–20 in St. Louis, the association will seek to give back to the community, promote green practices and more.

"Social and environmental impact are integral to what we do as meeting professionals," MPI said. "With that in mind, WEC St. Louis has been designed to reduce our use of resources and give back to the local community."

WEC St. Louis is serving as one of five pilot events being used to demonstrate the business case for practical interventions that reduce food waste at meetings and conferences. The project is spearheaded by the U.S. Food Waste Pact, ReFED and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and led by Astrapto.

Association staff and venue and catering partners received training and support in deploying strategies to reduce food waste, recognize efficiencies for onsite teams and clients and solidify lasting practices to achieve sustainability goals. MPI noted the

WEC will be included in a final case study and toolkit, showcasing its contributions to advancing sustainable event practices.

MPI will also be auditing food functions throughout the event and adjusting in real time to demonstrate positive impact and reduce the food waste footprint.

The WEC will also afford attendees the opportunity to give back in a variety of ways to St. Louis and other communities. They can join the MPI Foundation for Hospital Art and brighten the lives of patients by painting murals for St. Louis

hospitals.

Working with the United Way of Great St. Louis, attendees can stop by the Explore St. Louis Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) area supported by Levy Restaurants and assemble 750 Dental Smile and Hygiene Kits for families in St. Louis. United Way will coordinate with Urban League to distribute the kits. Books are also being collected for circulation within the community.

WEC participants will receive Rally Bracelets in partnership with the theme sponsor Visit OKC (Oklahoma

Please turn to page 5

Delta Flies WWII Veterans to Normandy to Commemorate D-Day

By Todd McElwee

For the fourth consecutive year, Delta Air Lines hosted its Normandy Legacy Flight—a first-of-its-kind program flying World War II veterans and students to Normandy, France, to commemorate the anniversary of the D-Day (June 6, 1944) invasion, honor the legacy of heroes and educate the next generation.

Delta, Michelin and the Best Defense Foundation supported the return of 23 veterans to Normandy from May 31 to June 9. Veterans participated in a series of special

commemorative events honoring the memory, legacy and sacrifice of the service members.

"It is our honor and privilege to continue this historic charter and week-long celebration as a journey of remembrance and gratitude, dedicated to our World War II heroes," said Delta CEO Ed Bastian. "Delta has a deep history of supporting our military service members and veterans, and this program is one of the many ways we live our values in service of those who served us."

Delta and the Best Defense Foundation brought 10 students through

its NextGen Program to Normandy. The immersive experience permitted students to walk in the footsteps of history alongside the veterans who lived it, visiting important sites and attending the Freedom Prize ceremony in Caen on June 3.

"Each year, we remain committed to honoring the sacrifices of our WWII veterans by bringing them back to the battlefields where they served," said Donnie Edwards, President & Co-Founder Best Defense Foundation. "As we return to Normandy for the 81st anniversary, we continue our proud partnership with Delta Air Lines

to provide these heroes the opportunity for reflection, remembrance, and camaraderie. Their stories are a living testament to history, and we are grateful to stand beside them as we pay tribute to their legacy."

As part of the program, the Best Defense Foundation provides caregivers for each WWII veteran throughout the trip, including Delta team members from its Veterans Business Resource Group (BRG) and other BRGs. Delta also partnered with Aviramp, a U.K. manufacturer of boarding equipment, to provide

Please turn to page 6

HOTS

HOTS Goodyear Blimp Centennial... A fleet of Goodyear blimps took laps over Akron, Ohio—the city of origin for the Goodyear tire brand—on June 3 to celebrate 100 years of the iconic airship, the Associated Press reported. The Goodyear blimp has a “cult following,” according to Jim Crone, Manager of Airship Maintenance with Goodyear. “People love the airships,” he said. In the Akron area of Ohio, “they identify with Goodyear and identify with the airships. They’ve become part of this community.” The original Goodyear blimp made its inaugural flight on

June 3, 1925. Today, there are four Goodyear blimps: three in the United States and one in Germany. Goodyear has 10 full-time blimp pilots on staff. HOTS thinks that’s one successful advertising campaign.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱

HOTS Dilly Dally Along... A rescued and rehabilitated adolescent loggerhead sea turtle named Dilly Dally waddled into the Atlantic Ocean on June 4 months after an operation to remove one of the turtle’s front flippers, the Associated Press reported. Dilly Dally arrived at the Loggerhead Marinelife Center in Juno Beach, Florida, in January with wounds from a predator on its front flipper where the veterinary crew helped to get the turtle back to the sea. “Every time we release a turtle back into the wild is special and not just for us but for all the interns and volunteers and everyone that puts an effort to getting these turtles back out



Greater Miami CVB Chair Julissa Kepner and President & CEO David Whitaker unveiled the organization's 2024 Visitor Industry Overview at its annual State of the Travel & Tourism Industry event at Jungle Island on May 29.

there,” said Marika Weber, a veterinary technician with the Marinelife Center. “It’s always a special day.” Dilly Dally was equipped with a satellite tracker

and was sent off into the sea by a small crowd of encouraging spectators. HOTS wishes Dilly Dally nothing but luck back in the ocean!

Hyatt Unveils New Upscale Collection Brand of Hotels

By Jordan Bradley

Hyatt Hotels announced on May 30 the launch of a new upscale collection brand, Unscripted by Hyatt.

The new brand sits in the upscale segment and is “designed for travelers who value the essentials and prefer spontaneity over structure,” Hyatt said.

According to the company, the Unscripted by Hyatt brand intends to focus on brand growth through adaptive reuse and conversion-friendly properties.

The aim of the brand is to “bring

to life a flexible, collection-style approach where each property reflects its own identity and local flavor yet remains unmistakably Hyatt in quality and care,” Hyatt said.

“The Unscripted by Hyatt brand gives owners a flexible path to join the Hyatt system while still delivering the high-quality, dependable experience guests expect from Hyatt,” said Dan Hansen, Head of Americas Development, Hyatt. “By joining the growing World of Hyatt loyalty program, owners benefit from our powerful network where an innovative new brand like Unscripted by Hyatt widens

our guest and customer reach and strengthens the value of the whole Hyatt system.”

For potential owners, the Unscripted by Hyatt brand will provide independent properties and smaller hotel portfolios a “light-touch” operating model and flexible brand standards. This combination will allow for owners to maintain what makes them unique while benefiting from being members of Hyatt’s loyalty program, World of Hyatt.

Hyatt said more than 40 hotels are already in active discussions to join the brand.

Bass

continued from page 1

truly stands out as a must-experience destination.”

During his earlier tenure at Visit San Antonio, Bass achieved the highest annual room night production in the organization’s history, transformed the Destination Experience Department “from a reactive resource into a proactive industry thought leader,” and capitalized on emerging business segments post-pandemic with a recovery deployment and engagement plan, among many other successes, according to the group.

Prior to rejoining the organization, Bass served as COO at Visit Orlando. Bass also built a career in hotel sales and marketing with Marriott International.

Loris Menfi, Chair of Visit San Antonio, noted that Bass had wide-

spread support from industry stakeholders.

“The search committee was deeply inspired by the overwhelming and unsolicited support Mario received from both industry leaders and the community. San Antonio can take immense pride in having one of its own possess such an outstanding résumé and extraordinary talent,” said Menfi. “From the outset, it was unmistakably clear to the selection committee that Mario’s exceptional track record and impeccable cultural fit made him the unequivocal choice to lead the Visit San Antonio team.”

Bass, who grew up in the city’s South Side, has a wife, Renee, and a son, Aiden.

“The Visit San Antonio team and I are focused on strengthening our core mission of bringing the world to San Antonio to put heads in beds and fill our convention center, restaurants, attractions and cultural institutions



Mario Bass

to continue growing the positive economic impact and tax revenues, and keep my fellow San Antonians working,” said Bass.

WEEKLY NEWS
OF ASSOCIATIONS
CVBs AND
HOTELS

USAE

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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.

usaenews.com

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NEWS

NoMad Brand to Make Michigan Debut in Detroit's Central Station

By Jordan Bradley

NoMad Hotels—a Hilton Hotel Corp. brand centered on “a vision of an artfully-lived life,”—will make its Michigan debut at The Station at Michigan Central in Detroit, with the NoMad Detroit expected to open in 2027.

Housed inside the formerly abandoned passenger rail station, Michigan Central Station, the NoMad Detroit will offer 180 guest rooms on the historic building's top five floors, Hilton announced on June 2. The hotel's debut will mark the first time in the building's more-than-100-year history that the floors will be occupied.

“Michigan Central is proud to welcome the NoMad brand to Detroit, bringing world-class hospitality to one of the country's most iconic buildings,” said Josh Sirefman, CEO, Michigan Central. “This partnership is a continuation of our work of turning The Station at Michigan Central into a global destination that serves residents and attracts visitors as well as inspiring entrepreneurs, industry,

and creatives.”

The building that is now known as the Michigan Central Station originally opened in 1913 to replace the Detroit Union Depot. The Station was renovated and reopened by Ford Motor Company last June as part of Michigan Central, a technology hub that opened in April 2023.

During the renovation of the hotel's new space, Hilton said the NoMad will focus on the city's architectural style and significance as the only UNESCO designated City of Design in the United States.

As part of the hotel's contribution to The Station, the NoMad brand will reimagine the building's historic restaurant and carriage house into a signature NoMad restaurant and bar concepts.

“Together with NoMad and Hilton, we are now announcing the next phase of our ambitious vision offering visitors and the community a unique hotel destination and memorable food and beverage experiences in this iconic landmark,” said Bill Ford, Executive Chair, Ford Motor Company. “The new NoMad Detroit hotel will not just



The NoMad Hotels brand from Hilton will make its debut in Michigan with the forthcoming NoMad Detroit. Image by Jason Keen © 2025 Hilton

be a place to stay, but an energetic and exciting gathering place for years to come.”

The collaboration between NoMad and Ford is a natural one, according to Kara Randall, Vice President, Lux-

ury and Mixed-Used Development, Hilton, as both represent “iconic American companies at this quintessential crossroads for U.S. travel in the historic renovation of Michigan Central Station.”

California Hotel Guests Awarded \$2M for Bed Bug Bites

By Jordan Bradley

A jury has awarded two guests of the Shores Inn hotel in Ventura, California, \$2 million after their stay in hotel room resulted in “painful” bed bug bites, skin rashes and injuries, according to the complaint.

The payout was awarded to Alvaro Gutierrez and Ramiro Sanchez on May 30. The jury awarded Gutierrez \$400,000 in damages for past and future pain as a result of the bites,

\$600,000 to Sanchez, and an additional \$500,000 to each for punitive damages, according to court records as reported by the *Los Angeles Times*.

According to the complaint, Gutierrez and Sanchez stayed at the Shores Inn—a beachside hotel—on February 7, 2020.

The pair filed the complaint in December 2021, which alleged they immediately began experiencing bed bug bites upon entering the hotel room.

“The bed bugs latched onto the Plaintiffs while they slept, sucked their blood until they were gorged, and resisted eradication,” the complaint said.

The complaint alleged Gutierrez and Ramiro “suffered from numerous bed bug bites, which caused and presently continue to cause pain, discomfort, annoyance, sleeplessness, inconvenience, humiliation, anxiety and ongoing mental and emotional distress.”

In the lawsuit, Gutierrez and Sanchez allege the hotel's management was likely aware of the property's problem with bed bugs because several online reviews warning guests of the alleged infestation. Yet they failed to exterminate the bed bugs from the hotel, the pair alleged.

The pair only stayed at the hotel for one night before vacating.

Representatives from the Shores Inn did not return *USAE* request for comment by press deadline.

Travel Ban

continued from page 1

promise to protect Americans from dangerous foreign actors that want to come to our country and cause us harm,” White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson told CBS News. “These commonsense restrictions are country-specific and include places that lack proper vetting, exhibit high visa overstay rates, or fail to share identity and threat information. President Trump will always act in the best interest of the American people and their safety.”

On January 20, Trump issued an executive order requiring the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and the Director

of National Intelligence to compile a report identifying countries from which travel should be partly or fully suspended because their “vetting and screening information is so deficient.”

The travel ban echoes one Trump advanced in 2017 during his first term, when he nixed travel to the United States by citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries, including Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. That order was the subject of legal challenges until a version was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018.

Although many of the listed countries send few people to the United States, Haiti, Cuba, and Venezuela had been major sources of immigration in recent years, according to the Associated Press.

“President Trump will always act in the best interest of the American people and their safety.”



Hyatt Hotels President and CEO Mark Hoplamazian was recognized with the Cornell Hospitality Icon of the Industry Award on June 3 at the 16th Annual Cornell Hospitality Icon and Innovator Awards Celebration in New York. The award recognizes Hoplamazian's 18-year tenure as CEO of Hyatt and his dedication to creating a lasting impact on the hospitality industry.

NEWS

SITE Opens Crystal Awards Nominations

By Todd McElwee

Inviting incentive travel professionals to apply for what it said is “considered the highest honor in our industry,” the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) has opened nominations for the Crystal Awards. The honors recognize creative, practical and memorable incentive programs.

Winners will be honored during the Crystal Awards Gala, taking place at the SITE Global Conference next February in Abu Dhabi.

“The awards are aimed at incentive travel professionals all over the world,” SITE said. “Winners represent excellence in their profession and

offer inspirational examples of how incentive travel experiences benefit qualifiers, their companies, and the destinations where they are hosted.”

The five categories are:

- Best Destination-Based Experiential Incentive Travel Program
- Excellence in Incentive Travel
- Best Destination Marketing Campaign
- Most Impactful Effort Toward Corporate Social Responsibility as Part of an Incentive Program or Most Environmentally Sustainable Incentive Experience
- Most Creative Solution Deployed to Overcome Adversity

Entries will be accepted for incentive travel programs and campaigns



held from June 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025. Applications are due by August 1. SITE members pay \$250 for first entry and \$200 for additional entries. Non-SITE members pay \$500 for first

entry and \$250 for others.

The Crystal Awards are sponsored by The IMEX Group.

Find the complete criteria at siteglobal.com.

MPI

continued from page 2

City) and Colors for Good. Colors for Good supports and empowers women in remote areas of Latin America by providing work-from-home job opportunities, which help improve their lives and uplift their communities.

Green initiatives include a part-

nership with Forest Park Forever. Thirty-five trees will be planted on behalf of WEC St. Louis attendees. For the first time, conference education can be filtered by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Attendees can calculate the carbon footprint of their travel and purchase offsets from the Carbon Fund.

The People and Planet section of the conference's website also includes

a land acknowledgement from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

MPI states: “The WEC St. Louis event is hosted on the ancestral, traditional and contemporary lands of the Osage Nation, Otoe-Missouria, Illinois Confederacy, Quapaw, Ho-Chunk, Miami and many other tribes. We recognize their sovereignty was never ceded after unjust removal and encourage you

to learn more about tribal removal, tribal sovereignty and the history of the land you are visiting. In offering this land acknowledgement, we affirm and support Tribal sovereignty, history and experiences by elders past, present and seven generations yet to come through their continued connection to this land.”

Find more information at wec.mpi.org.

NAD Sues

continued from page 1

and the White House Press Secretary on official channels of communications.

“Deaf and hard of hearing Americans have the right to the same access to White House information as everyone else,” said Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, Interim CEO of NAD. “Denying them ASL interpreters is a

direct violation of that right, and the NAD will continue to fight for their full inclusion in the democratic process. Such information must be provided not only through captioning but also in American Sign Language.”

The complaint alleges the White House is in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which mandates meaningful access for people with disabilities to all White House communications, and is in violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Con-

stitution, which mandates freedom of exchange of information.

Since taking office in January, President Trump has signed more than 130 executive orders and taken actions that significantly impact the American people, NAD said. It added these actions include shutting down various offices within the federal government, reducing the federal workforce, and ending various federal programs and services.

“Without accessible information, these rapid changes leave deaf and

hard of hearing people with more questions than answers,” the association said. “When top government officials make important announcements without ASL interpreters, deaf and hard of hearing people cannot meaningfully access this information—including critical information about protecting their families and livelihoods.”

Two deaf individuals—Derrick Ford and Matthew Bonn—have joined NAD in the lawsuit.

Wage Ordinance

continued from page 1

shut down, workers will lose their jobs, and the economic fallout will stretch across the city,” Singer said. “We’re fighting for all of it: the city’s future, the jobs that sustain our communities, and the millions of guests the tourism industry proudly serves year after year.”

In an April 11 interview with City News Service, Jackie Filla, CEO of the Hotel Association of Los Angeles, said the ordinance would raise labor costs by 40% to 60%, noting that travel is the first expense to be cut when times are tough and that international travel is seeing a decrease.

“For instance, if Canadians follow through on their boycott, we’re the top place Canadians come to visit, and for us that would result in a loss

of 770,000 room nights just in 2025,” Filla told the outlet.

According to Singer and the *Times*, the alliance has received funding from Delta Airlines, United Airlines and the American Hotel & Lodging Association.

Hotel and airport workers have in turn responded to the Alliance by holding rallies on the steps of the Los Angeles City Hall—the first on June 3—with local hotel worker union Unite Here Local 11 leading the charge. The union was also a major proponent for the wage increase ordinance.

“The hotel industry’s greed is limitless,” said Kurt Petersen, Co-President of Unite Here Local 11. “They would rather spend millions getting them to sign this petition than pay their workers enough to live in Los Angeles. It’s shameful, but we’re confident that Angelenos will see through their deceptions and stand with workers.”



The Unite Here Local 11 hotel worker union held a rally on the steps of the Los Angeles City Hall on June 3 to protest an industry endeavor to bring the Olympic Wage Ordinance to a citywide vote next July.

NEWS

Nashville's Music City Center Releases Expansion Study Results

By Jonathan Trager

New data collected during a nine-month feasibility study supports a massive expansion of the Music City Center (MCC) in Nashville, the Convention Center Authority has announced.

HVS Convention, Sports & Entertainment, a hospitality and consulting services firm, presented the results of the study to the Authority on June 5. The firm was awarded a contract in September 2024 to evaluate the need and feasibility of expanding the current facility, which opened in 2013.

Overall, the study recommended

expanding MCC by an additional 300,000 square feet of exhibit, ballroom, and meeting space. Including necessary operational space, the total recommended expansion is 587,000 square feet.

"In the 30 years that I've been working, studying convention centers' development and expansion, I've never seen a more compelling case for expansion," said Thomas Hazinski, HVS Managing Director.

Between fiscal years 2023 and 2024, more than 45% of events couldn't be booked at MCC because of space limitations and availability

constraints, according to the study. Feedback from a Customer Advisory Board and a survey of current and prospective planners showed limited available space threatens future business.

"The results hold true to what we've seen in recent years," said Charles Starks, President & CEO of MCC. "Despite being a destination for meetings and events, we simply don't have the space to accommodate every group, and we're turning away business daily."

The study found that among 15 comparable venues—including Aus-

tin, New Orleans, and Orlando—MCC ranks below average for function space square footage. Most top-tier facilities also have expansion or renovation projects recently completed, underway, or planned, the study noted.

Next steps include site selection and building planning, followed by a secondary phase for financial and impact analysis. A timeline for the additional work hasn't been set yet.

"There is much more work to be done, but the potential for expansion would improve our competitive positioning, as well as the impact on our community," said Starks.

WWII Veterans

continued from page 2

a safe and comfortable boarding and deplaning experience for the

veterans.

"Eighty-one years after the D-Day landings, Normandy continues to show its gratitude and eternal recognition to the heroes who liberated its territory, France, and Europe at the

risk of their lives," said Hervé Morin, President of the Regional Council of Normandy. "It will be a great honor for me to welcome these veterans, like previous years, to the Abbaye aux Dames in Caen to celebrate this

great moment in the history of humanity and the return of democracy and peace. We are honored by their participation along with the American students at the Freedom Prize ceremony."

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