



Two hundred people traveled to Central Oregon to attend the 2025 TravelAbility Summit held at the Sunriver Resort on October 13–15. TravelAbility Founder and CEO Jake Steinman (front row, third from right) moderated discussions about the current goings-on in accessible travel and shared initiatives of TravelAbility moving forward.

Workers at Texas Hotel Vote to Approve New Labor Contract

Historic Strike Ended

By Jordan Bradley

The first and only hotel strike led by union members in the state of Texas ended when union workers voted to approve a new labor contract on October 10.

On the 40th day of the Unite Here Local 23 hotel worker strike at the Hilton Americas-Houston hotel in Houston, workers ratified a contract that guarantees unprecedented wage increases, better workloads for housekeepers, job security protections, and increases in job safety.

Employees went back to work on October 12, according to local news reports.

The contract secured a wage increase from \$16.50 to \$20 an hour for the property's housekeepers, laundry attendants, and stewards, and phased wage increases guaranteed to bring the hourly wages up to \$22 an hour by the end of the three-year contract, according to *Houston Public Media*.

Please turn to page 6

NRA Sues California Over Glock Ban

By Todd McElwee

The National Rifle Association (NRA) has filed a lawsuit challenging California's Glock ban.

Filed on October 13 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, NRA argues California's ban on Glock-style handguns violates the Second Amendment. It added the Supreme Court has held that "common" arms cannot be banned, and moreover, that handguns cannot be banned.

NRA said that earlier this month Gov. Gavin Newsom signed four anti-gun bills advanced by the legislature this session. More than 30 anti-gun laws have been signed during his tenure, NRA said.

The bills include the following:

- Assembly Bill 1078 makes several provisions to California's firearm laws, including limiting residents to three firearm purchases within a 30-day period. California previously enacted a "one-gun-a-month" law, which a U.S. District Court struck

down as unconstitutional.

- Assembly Bill 1127 prohibits firearms dealers from selling certain semi-automatic pistols. While the stated intent is to restrict individuals from converting pistols into automatic "machine guns," federal law already prohibits devices that convert semi-automatic firearms to fire automatically.

- Assembly Bill 1263 creates a new crime for "knowingly or willfully" causing another person to unlawfully

Please turn to page 3

Austin PAC Delivers Petition to Halt Convention Center Project

By Jonathan Trager

The Austin United PAC has submitted a petition to the city clerk's office that calls for voters to decide via a ballot measure whether to pursue an expanded convention center.

The proposition, which would appear on a May 2026 election ballot, would to suspend the ongoing \$1.6 billion project for seven years or until it receives voter approval. The Texas city began construction on the new convention center last month as the old one

was being demolished.

Austin United delivered the petition containing 21,000 signatures, which must be validated within 30 days, on October 13. That's 1,000 more signatures than required to qualify a ballot proposition.

Finn Sonniksen, a spokesperson for Austin United, told the *Austin American-Statesman* the PAC has already reviewed and eliminated invalid or ineligible signatures.

"We're really excited and really proud of our work,"

Please turn to page 3

Inside



Page 3

Page 4
Trevor Noah Presenting Closing Keynote at PCMA's Convening Leaders

Page 5
Matthew Bryant Named General Manager of Mobile Convention Center

Page 6
IAEE Announces Expo! Expo! Destinations Through 2028

Annual TravelAbility Summit Discusses the Future of Accessible Travel

By Jordan Bradley

The seventh annual TravelAbility Summit gathers destination representatives, tech innovators, leaders in accessibility advocacy and implementation, and individuals with disabilities every year to discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly of tourism through the lens of accessibility.

That the summit was held in chilly, perfectly-fall central Oregon at the Sunriver Resort of October 13–15 was especially apt: Oregon has been at the

forefront of accessibility travel and outdoor accessibility, has been a strong presence at previous Summits, and the state itself was the first to be verified as an accessible state by Wheel the World. The digital platform connects travelers with disabilities to detailed information of an evaluated location's accessibility offerings and provides accessibility assessments to businesses such as hotels and restaurants, destinations, and regions.

TravelAbility Founder
Please turn to page 5

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HOTS

HOTS New Mayor for Nova Scotia... The town of Amherst, Nova Scotia, is scouting "qualified quadrupeds" for the town's first ever pet mayor, UPI reports. The campaign is being conducted in partnership with the Lillian Allbon Animal Shelter, which identified 10 candidates submitted by local residents. The town and the animal shelter are not inviting the public to vote on their preferred candidate. A vote costs \$5 CA (\$3.56 US), and the proceeds benefit the Lillian Allbon Animal Shelter. The candidates include nine dogs—Derby, Major, Susie, Raeya, Ducky, Nunya Beeswax, Jack, Mr.

Bear, and Nova—and one cat, Meowstache (or Sherlock). According to Lori O'Connell, a representative from the animal shelter, people are sending in campaign flyers for the furry candidates. "Responses have been so creative, seeing the designs that people are putting together," she told CTV News. "I've been promoting it on my end, but the stuff that people are sending to me, the edits and the slogans and their campaign promises are so cut and creative, and people are really trying to win." As far as HOTS can tell, there will be no losers in this race.

* * * * *

HOTS Halloween Mystery... The University of Montana has a perfectly seasonal and spooky mystery on its hands every year. According to UPI, for the last 30 years, around Halloween, a pumpkin is found impaled on the spire atop the college's main hall. This year is no exception, but the identities of the Halloween tricksters of 30 years remain unknown. However, an anonymous climber shared some insight with local news outlet NBC Montana, explaining that a whole team of people contribute



In the spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship, Visit Seattle President & CEO Tammy Canavan and Destination Toronto CEO Andrew Weir have made a friendly wager: If the Seattle Mariners win and advance to the World Series, Weir will don Seattle gear and pose for photos at some of Toronto's iconic attractions, while Canavan will do the equivalent if the Blue Jays prevail.

every year. "Multiple lookouts all throughout campus, middle of the night, then two climbers up top everyone looking out for UM [police department] with radios and group texts, what have you," the person

said. In recent years, the university has hired professional climbers to carry on the legacy safely, "but being climbers we still try to race them to do it first," the source said. HOTS admires the commitment to the bit!

center to be put towards the city's parks, music, and arts. The project is being funded by hotel occupancy tax revenue.

"By giving these huge amounts of money to a convention center, our culture, history and parks continue to fight for pennies, leaving Austin as we know it to disappear and degrade," according to the group's website. Austin Mayor Kirk Watson, a project

supporter, has said the redeveloped convention center "will create a vital downtown amenity and urban connector."

The new convention center will offer nearly double the square footage of the old facility, expanding the space from 365,000 square feet to 620,000 square feet, and is expected to open in 2029.

WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS CYB AND HOTELS

USAE

PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR 1982 – 2021
Anne Daly Heller

PUBLISHER-EMERITUS
Ross E. Heller
ross@usaenews.com

PUBLISHER
James Heller
james@usaenews.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Todd McElwee
todd@usaenews.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Jonathan Trager
jon@usaenews.com

HOTEL EDITOR
Jordan Bradley
jordan@usaenews.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Diane Nichols
dkn@usaenews.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Danielle Erbe

MARKETING & CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Christy Pumphrey
christy@usaenews.com

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

usaenews.com

USAE, Inc.
PO Box 15009, Chevy Chase, MD 20825
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Austin PAC

continued from page 1

Sonnixsen said, according to the *American-Statesman*. "We've had so much help from the community, so many people from across the political spectrum, from different age groups, people of different professions." Austin United wants money earmarked for the expanded convention

Glock Ban

continued from page 1

manufacture a firearm.

- Senate Bill 704 requires firearm barrels to be sold or transferred only through licensed dealers and with a background check.

John Commerford, NRA-ILA Executive Director, said: "Our message to Governor Newsom is simple: we will see you in court. Gavin Newsom and his gang of progressive politicians in California are continuing their crusade against constitutional rights. Once again, they are attempting to violate landmark Supreme Court decisions and disarm law-abiding citizens by banning some of the most commonly owned handguns in America. This flagrant violation of rights cannot, and will not, go unchecked."

NRA was joined in the suit by Firearms Policy Coalition, Second Amendment Foundation, Poway Weapons & Gear, and two NRA members.

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NEWS

Trevor Noah Presenting Closing Keynote at PCMA's Convening Leaders

By Todd McElwee

Trevor Noah, the former host of *The Daily Show*, comedian, producer, and *New York Times* bestselling author, will deliver the closing keynote during PCMA's Convening Leaders (CL26), January 11–14 in Philadelphia.

Noah will examine resiliency, global change and storytelling during his presentation on January 14.

"Trevor will be an extraordinary culmination to Convening Leaders 2026," said Sherrif Karamat, CAE, President & CEO, PCMA and CEMA. "His global perspective, matched with his story and humor, embody the inspiration necessary as we continue the journey to position business events as a catalyst for economic and social progress—to create meaningful change across the globe."

PCMA said Noah will "captivate" participants with his trademark wit and cultural insights. He'll draw from his journey of growing up in South Africa to becoming a global voice during a fireside chat.

Currently hosting a Spotify original weekly podcast titled *What Now? With Trevor Noah*, he hosted the Emmy Award-win-

ning *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central for seven years. He's the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* and its young readers adaptation titled *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* and has written, produced, and starred in 12 comedy specials.

The Trevor Noah Foundation's goal is to improve equitable access to quality education for underserved youth in South Africa.

"Trevor Noah Foundation is an ode to the greatest gift Trevor Noah has ever received, learning. Fueled by Trevor's love for education, for giving kids an opportunity, and for the teachers that got him to where he is today; the Foundation honestly believes education is the seed from which everything grows," the organization's website said.

This closing main stage, supported by Destination Cleveland, will also provide the first look

at what's ahead for Convening Leaders 2027, January 10–13 in Miami.

Find more information at conveningleaders.org.



Travel Agency Fora Turns Focus to Accessibility in Luxury Market

By Jordan Bradley

Travel agency Fora is disrupting the way luxury travel agents do business. With a subscription-based model, individuals interested in becoming travel agents are able access a global community of agents, trainings, an integrated business platform, and established partner relationships.

Karen Morales, the powerhouse behind independent Fora-affiliated travel agency Joyward Travel Co., a passionate advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, a lover of travel and the co-lead on Fora's accessibility programming, is convinced that the luxury travel market is missing out on a huge swath of customers with disabilities—and she's got the numbers to prove it.

In 2020, Morales endured an accident that accelerated a lifelong diagnosis of muscular dystrophy, requiring her to use a wheelchair for the first time. The way she traveled and the experiences she had changed in an instant, yet Morales was determined to get out in the world and enjoy its offerings. Traveling while using a wheelchair for the first time in her life, Morales learned so much and discovered a passion for accessible travel.

"When I started using a wheelchair, I started traveling even more because it made me feel more free," Morales said.

During the same year, Fora's founders—entrepreneurs Henley Vazquez, Evan Frank, and Jake Peters—were inspired by Covid's impact on travel and tourism to take a closer look at the industry of travel advising.

"They had this discussion about the future of travel advising and how it should be something that is more accessible, like real estate," Morales told *USAE*. "You could be a suburban mom or dad, you could do soccer, and you could also flip a couple houses a couple times a year. It just gives people something to do, and they can have a niche."

"If you look around a legacy travel agent event," Morales continued, many of the attendees "do this as a bougie side job, so it's not very diverse, and it's not bringing in new segments of Gen Z, Gen X, [or] Gen Y. So [the Fora founders were] like, 'Wow, this is ripe to be disrupted.'"

With her personal travel experiences in her back pocket, Morales embraced the niche of accessible travel when she established Joyward and joined Fora in 2023.

A few weeks after joining and

booking clients with Fora, word about Morales' niche in accessibility and disability accommodations spread through the company until she was asked to give a training on accessibility for travel agents, she said.

Frank attended the training and was so impacted by her session that he told Morales they wanted to begin training all Fora agents in accessibility, which she began conducting in earnest in August 2024—and the response has been significant, she said.

A benchmarking survey of 2024 bookings found the number of accessible bookings made through Fora equaled \$50 million—without a whole year of targeted attention and development.

"The goal was, first, we're going to bring in agents that have an interest in accessibility, and we're going to grow the pool of agents, so we now have hundreds of agents who have raised their hands because they have a lived experience in accessibility," Morales said. "And then we've created trainings across mobility, autism, food allergies, service dogs, everything for these agents to access and get certified in. We've created communities and groups, and we've certified like 200 properties that we think are good be-

cause of that, and because of all these conversations."

And travelers are afforded "incredible experiences and hotels stays full of bespoke itineraries that our travel advisors can book for their clients—no matter what their accessibility accommodation might be," Morales said.

On the side of the hotel businesses, Fora brings many benefits, Morales said.

"Because our technology is so good—this came up a lot on our portal—I can see how many times the hotel has been booked by how many agents, and I can show [hotels] the reviews from our clients and our agents."

She continued: "And now with our tech stack, we're sending them forecasting reports to show them in the next six, 12, 18 months how many bookings are on the books. They currently don't have access to that internally."

Fora agents, too, are engaged and excited in the world of travel advising, Morales said.

"We're giving [hotels] an entirely new group of people," Morales said, adding that "the people who have been doing it, most of the time, for 20 or 30 years in luxury—they have their

Please turn to page 5

NEWS

Matthew Bryant Named General Manager of Mobile Convention Center

By Jonathan Trager

Matthew Bryant, a 30-year hospitality veteran, has been named General Manager of the Mobile Convention Center in Alabama.

"I'm honored to join the OVG team in Mobile and build on the Convention Center's rich legacy," said Bryant. "This is a city with incredible cultural depth, natural beauty, and genuine Southern hospitality, and I'm excited to collaborate with local partners to deliver exceptional guest experiences."

Bryant previously served as chair of Traverse City Tourism and treasurer of the Saugatuck CVB in Michigan. He

has also held senior executive roles with nationally recognized hospitality brands and venues such as the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, Embassy Suites Nashville SE, and the Sheraton Grand Rapids Airport.

"Mobile's deep cultural roots and thriving community make it an ideal hub for live events," said Greg O'Dell, President of Venue Management for the Oak View Group, which manages the convention center. "With such an experienced support team leading the way, we're entering the next phase of growth for our operations to firmly position the city as a must-visit destination for meetings,

conventions, sports, and entertainment."

Joining Bryant to oversee operations at the convention center is Director of Events Alphonse Stalliard. He will lead client services, coordination, and execution.

Meanwhile, the Mobile Arena is set to open in early 2027. The new general manager for the Mobile Arena will be announced at a later date, according to Oak View Group.



Matthew Bryant

TravelAbility

continued from page 1

and CEO Jake Steinman told *USAE* that he and the TravelAbility team were impressed by Visit Central Oregon's and Travel Oregon's attention to and thoughtfulness of the needs of the summit's attendees.

The conference was held in a more remote location than in previous years, with attendees required to travel 45 minutes from the nearest commercial airport in Redmond to the small resort town of Sunriver.

"I was a little worried about attendance because of the remoteness of the location, but our attendance has been great this year," Steinman said.

There was record attendance at last year's conference held in San Francisco with 208 attendees, Steinman said—still, the conference sold out this year.

Steinman told *USAE* the Visit Central Oregon crew made sure the summit's 200 attendees would have access to shuttles from the airport to the resort upon arrival and departure, and for those traveling outside the pre-arranged shuttle times, a discount code for Uber rides was provided.

"We believe Oregon can be, should be, must be a destination that's welcoming to everybody," Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, told *USAE* at the Summit. "We want everyone to feel valued and safe and cherished here. Hosting this event was kind of a capstone because it comes on the heels of receiving the certification for the state, which is currently the only state that is accessibility verified. So now our visitors with disabilities and their families and friends who are traveling with them...can come to Oregon and there are 750 businesses in 43 communities in all seven regions of the state that have been vetted against a scorecard of 200 different attributes."

As the theme for this year's event

was "The Future of Inclusive Travel," sessions included: Preparing for aging travelers, capturing the accessible luxury market, ways for tourism businesses to go beyond Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance to have real impact on guests with disabilities, and so much more.

TravelAbility hosted its first film festival, receiving 52 entries from eight countries; and announced the completion of a comprehensive database of social media content creators with disabilities. The database was constructed with the intention of helping destinations more easily identify content creators with which to partner.

During the October 13 session on TravelAbility's Accessibility Playbook—introduced earlier this year in partnership with Destinations International—presenters Ava Wells, Social Impact Manager at DI, and Amy Jukes, CEO and principal consultant at AmVarra, introduced the Playbook's AI companion.

The Playbook offers a comprehensive guide for destinations, attractions, hotels and restaurants to start thinking about accessibility. Most importantly, "the Playbook meets you where you're at," Jukes said.

With the AI companion, making progress in accessibility—whether through a more accessible website or identifying training gaps for attraction staff—is that much easier for a destination, attraction or hotel.

"You may be wondering, how can I make accessibility really a reality within my destination? And sometimes having a document or going through checklists can be cumbersome, especially if we have small teams," Wells said during the session. "So we're going to put those best practices into action, and that's where we'd like to introduce you to the AI companion. This is a next step forward, the next generation that takes the playbook, pulls together in those standards, those legislative practices, and really brings together

an implementation tool for destination organizations to use."

The AI companion is available to anyone who has purchased the playbook, and allows users to provide prompts like "I need to develop a proposal for community accessibility funding. Can you help me?" to the playbook's closed-loop chat bot, and receive guidance from accessibility resources, but not from the entirety of the internet, resulting in relevant and refined feedback.

Users are also able to feed the companion their organization's strategic plans to further elevate the AI's analysis.

For Travel Oregon's Vice President of Global Marketing Kevin Wright, what really stuck with him was the importance of training individuals at travel destinations in the best practices of hosting and serving individuals with disabilities, he told *USAE*.

"I'm the marketing guy," Wright said, adding that a training program may not be right for his department to "run with, but I would bring the appropriate folks in our agency together to say, 'I think there's an opportunity here.' Somebody said it yesterday, and I

thought it really resonated with me. It's like, you can do all this work—you can do the program we're doing in the real world and the assessments, but if the visitor comes here and has a terrible experience because of an interaction with an employee, it doesn't matter."

A common topic of discussion both in panels and presentations and in conversations between attendees throughout the conference was the potential accessibility has to impact, not just a tourism destination or DMO, but also the community itself.

"It's currently a \$120 million industry [globally], but it has the opportunity to be a \$3 billion industry," Wright said. "Those numbers are mirrored nationally, and I think what one of the greatest things about this is you've just got this intersection of the moral opportunity and the economic opportunity that just really coincide nicely. I think that's what gets me really excited about it, is helping our communities with that economic input, but [also] doing great work to help disabled travelers. And it's not just the travelers. The things we do in Oregon will also benefit our residents, too. There's just so much upside."

Fora

continued from page 4

partners. They don't really want new information. They're checked out."

But Fora agents? "They ask questions, they're so excited. They send thank-you notes. And it's a new audience of people that are not burned out."

Many agents "are stay-at-home moms or people that have always been interested in travel" and retirees who are "thrilled" to be doing the work of luxury travel agents, Morales said.

"They feel like it's a gift," she said, "So hoteliers are like, 'This is amazing.'"

For Morales—whose transition into life using a wheelchair was fraught

with Medicare tussles and a pronounced feeling of dismissal, she told *USAE*—her experience with Fora as an agent set a different tone.

"We've talked a lot about this idea of fighting" in disability advocacy work, Morales said, and the understanding that "ableism is a thing." But with Fora, the messaging to hoteliers and travel agents is not one of litigation, but rather inclusion and mutual benefits.

When speaking to luxury hoteliers, the message is: "People want to travel because they love it, and we need to let more people do it," Morales said. "You have the rooms, and you have the staff, so open the door—and that messaging lands because it's all about [if] you benefit, I benefit."

NEWS

IAEE Announces Expo! Expo! Destinations Through 2028

By Todd McElwee

Plans are set for Expo! Expo! IAEE's Annual Meeting & Exhibition through 2028. Milwaukee (2026), New Orleans (2027) and Las Vegas (2028) have been tapped to host the association's signature event. Expo! Expo! 2025 is December 8–10 in Houston.

"These next few years represent an exciting time for Expo! Expo! and IAEE as we celebrate incredible milestones while continuing to chart the

course for the future of our industry," said IAEE President & CEO Marsha Flanagan, CEM. "As the leading voice of the B2B exhibition industry, we're committed to delivering experiences that not only honor our rich heritage but also empower our members to innovate, connect and thrive. The energy and momentum we're building together will shape the next century of face-to-face business events."

Future Expo! Expo! Dates include the following:

- Milwaukee—November 16–18, 2026
- New Orleans—December 6–8, 2027
- Las Vegas—December 4–6, 2028

Expo! Expo! 2028 coincides with IAEE's centennial celebration. Originally organized as the National Association of Exposition Managers to represent the interests of trade show and exposition managers, IAEE said it "will celebrate 100 years of leadership in the international exhibition industry."

IAEE noted Expo! Expo! is the largest gathering of exhibition and event

organizers in the world. Last year's event in Los Angeles attracted 1,780 industry professionals.

"The event brings together industry leaders, innovative solutions, and cutting-edge strategies in an environment designed for professional growth and meaningful connections," IAEE said. "Attendees gain access to educational programming, networking opportunities, and the latest tools and technologies shaping the future of the industry."

Find more information at iaee.com.

Dan Hayes Appointed COO of Las Vegas CVA



Dan Hayes

By Jonathan Trager

Dan Hayes, General Manager of the Salt Palace Convention Center and the Mountain America Expo Center in Salt Lake County, Utah, has been

named the new COO of the Las Vegas CVA.

Hayes will start in his new position November 3. He replaces Brian Yost, who announced his retirement last week.

As COO, Hayes will oversee the LVCVA teams responsible for convention services, guest experience, facility operations, maintenance, and energy and utility services.

Hayes brings more than 25 years of leadership experience in convention and event venue management and oversaw major capital projects, playing a key role in planning a \$1.5 billion convention center renovation in Salt Lake City.

"Dan has a proven track record of building high-performing teams, driving results and bolstering key partnerships," said Steve Hill, President & CEO of the LVCVA. "His vision will be instrumental in maintaining Las Vegas' position as the premier

destination for world-class events and ensuring an exceptional convention center experience."

Hayes won the Visit Salt Lake Tourism Achievement Award and has

multiple certifications for sustainable operations.

He holds a bachelor's degree from the School of Natural Resources at the University of Vermont.

Nobu Hospitality to Open New Hotel and Restaurant in Nashville

By Jordan Bradley

Luxury hotel and restaurant brand Nobu Hospitality is set to open a new hotel and restaurant in Nashville, the company announced on October 8.

The Nobu Hotel and Restaurant Nashville will be a part of Nashville's forthcoming Oracle Corporation's development along the bank of the Cumberland River.

"We're excited to bring the Nobu lifestyle to Nashville's

East Bank, a vibrant district ready for growth," said Trevor Horwell, CEO of Nobu Hospitality.

The hotel will offer 120 guest rooms and suites designed by Foster + Partners done in Nobu's signature Japanese-inspired style, Nobu said. The Nobu hotel's restaurant will live on the ground floor and feature iconic dishes made popular by renowned Japanese chef and brand namesake Nobu Matsuhisa.

"After much anticipation and requests from our loyal Nobu customers, partnering with Oracle is a perfect match. Nashville's rich culture and culinary scene make it an ideal home for Nobu, and we can't wait to create a destination that embodies the city's spirit and our unique experience," Horwell said.

Alongside the restaurant, the

Nobu hotel will offer a "stylish" lobby cafe, fitness center, spa, an infinity rooftop pool with views of the Nashville skyline, and flexible meeting and event spaces, Nobu said.

The proposed \$1.2 billion, 70-acre Oracle campus is currently in

development, but construction has not yet begun, News Channel 5 Nashville reported. Outside of Nobu Hospitality's announcement, the development and Oracle, a health technology company, are gaining national attention,

according to The Tennessean, for the company's potential takeover of operations of social media platform TikTok in the United States.

Oracle is planning to move its global headquarters from Austin to Nashville, the company announced in 2024.

"Oracle is excited to break ground on our state-of-the-art campus in Nashville," said Don Watson, Oracle's Sr. Vice President of Global Real Estate and Facilities, in a statement. "The new development will position Nashville as a hub of AI innovation, leveraging the city's dynamic culture, urban setting, and talented workforce."

The Robert DeNiro-backed Nobu Hospitality did not announce when it expected the Nashville property to open.

Strike Ended

continued from page 1

"This victory is an attestation of our members' strength, their will, and determination," said Franchesca Caraballo, Texas Chapter President of Local 23. "They held the line for over a month in the heat and rain as they fought for better standards. Now we expect all the players in Houston's hospitality industry to follow suit and pay workers a living wage."

The Hilton property is owned by the Houston First Corporation, the city's conventions and visitors bureau and destination management organization. According to a September report from *Houston Public Media*, the Hilton Americas-Houston hotel made the corporation record-breaking profits in 2023.

"Houston First is pleased that Hilton and Unite Here Local 23 were able to reach a new collective bargaining agreement," said Michael Heckman,

President and CEO of Houston First, in a statement to *Houston Public Media*. "This deal gives our valuable hospitality workers, who are the lifeblood of our industry, a fair deal that reflects their hard work and dedication."

"Furthermore, we believe that the agreement reached meets the goal of balancing industry standards, the competitive marketplace, and the need to maintain and fairly compensate a strong and dedicated workforce. Labor negotiations can be complicated and we commend both sides for working in good faith to make this resolution possible."

According to the union, several major Houston venues—including the George R. Brown Convention Center, the Marriott Marquis, and the George Bush Intercontinental Airport—have contracts that are set to expire between October and December. The union represents hospitality workers at those venues as well.

Hilton did not immediately respond to *USAE* request for comment.

Scene At The 7th Annual TravelAbility Summit



NEWS

NW Chicago Convention Center Hotel Completes \$30M Renovation

By [Jordan Bradley](#)

The Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel in Illinois announced on October 15 the completion of a \$30 million renovation of its meeting and event spaces.

“With this renovation, the Renaissance Schaumburg continues to raise the bar for meetings and events in Chicago’s northwest suburbs,” said Dieter Heigl, General Manager of the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel. “We’re thrilled to welcome guests into a refreshed environment that inspires connection, creativity, and discovery.”

The Renaissance’s renovation “completely reimagined” the property’s 150,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including the introduction of a column-free 100,000-square-foot convention center, a grand ballroom encompassing

28,000 square feet, and 28 breakout rooms.

As part of the renovation, the convention center hotel is now complete with energy efficient lighting, new flooring and furnishings, and upgraded exhibitor amenities. The Renaissance’s convention center’s Market Place concession area was also redesigned and upgraded.

The region’s destination marketing organization, Meet Chicago Northwest, called the renovation a “major milestone for local tourism and economic development.”

“The Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel has long served as a cornerstone of the Chicago Northwest destination,” said Heather Larson, President & CEO of Meet Chicago Northwest. “This renovation reinforces our region’s reputation as a vibrant, accessible, and forward-thinking destination for meetings and



The Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel completed a full renovation of its convention center earlier this month.

leisure travelers alike.”

This July, the Renaissance completed a renovation of 500 hotel guest

rooms. a new 900-car parking center connected to the hotel is expected open by December 1.

Around Associations

CESSE Examining Bylaws with Venable LLP... On November 4, the CESSE will team with Andrew L. Steinberg, Esq., Partner, Venable LLP. for the Drafting and Revising Nonprofit Bylaws: Common Pitfalls and Best Practices webinar.

“Bylaws are the foundational guidelines that govern the internal management of every nonprofit,” CESSE said. “Faulty bylaws can create legal problems for organizations and make the governance of a nonprofit very difficult. This webinar will explain, step by step, how to draft and revise nonprofit bylaws, point out the most common mistakes, and highlight best practices.”

Steinberg advises nonprofit organizations on various matters and sensitive business affairs, CESSE said. It added clients benefit from having an adept advisor who can understand and manage the full array of their legal and business affairs.

Find more information at www.cesse.org.

NBAA Releases Newest Business Aviation Fact Book... The National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) has released a new edition of the “Business Aviation Fact Book,” a 33-page overview of the industry, detailing its role in the economy and transportation system, and the services it provides to citizens, companies and communities.

NBAA produced this latest edition of the Fact Book for the industry’s CLIMBING. FAST. advocacy campaign, supported by 15 international

aviation organizations.

“This new edition of the Business Aviation Fact Book is a trusted source for all the most important information about the industry’s value in supporting job creation, connecting communities, helping companies of all sizes succeed, providing humanitarian lift and innovating toward a sustainable future.” said Ed Bolen, President & CEO, NBAA.

The publication is downloadable as a PDF, and print copies were available at the NBAA Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (NBAA-BACE) in Las Vegas, October 14–16.

Find more information at www.nbaa.org.

Alzheimer’s Association and Edward Jones Extend Strategic Alliance Through 2030... The Alzheimer’s Association has announced Edward Jones is extending its strategic alliance with the Association through 2030. Since 2016, Edward Jones has served as the National Presenting Sponsor of the Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s (Walk).

As part of its renewed commitment, the firm will contribute \$1 million annually over the next five years to support Walk. It will also mobilize Walk teams in communities nationwide as part of its Diamond Level National Team.

“The Alzheimer’s Association is immensely proud of its long-standing strategic alliance with Edward Jones, and we are deeply grateful for its continued support,” said Joanne

Pike, DrPH, Alzheimer’s Association President and CEO. “Edward Jones and its associates have passionately supported our mission, making a profound difference in the lives of those impacted by Alzheimer’s and other dementia. The alliance is now poised to span decades.”

More than 130,000 Edward Jones associates, clients and family members have come together to raise

north of \$28 million through Walk participation. In 2024, Edward Jones was recognized as the top Walk National Team for the eighth consecutive year, contributing 25% of all corporate fundraising revenue. The firm has contributed more than \$55 million to support the Alzheimer’s Association through team fundraising and corporate contributions.

Find more information at alz.org.

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NEWS

10 Amazing Venues for Year-End Retreats in the Pocono Mountains

A new year is on the horizon, and it's the perfect time to reset and reconnect with your team on a year-end retreat. Just a few hours' drive away from major Northeastern hubs like New York and Philadelphia, the pristine natural beauty of the [Pocono Mountains](#) forms an inspiring backdrop for renowned resorts and up-to-date meeting venues where you can spark new ideas and create a stronger sense of community and camaraderie.

Whether you want to book a special holiday party to celebrate with co-workers or plan a strategic planning session to take time to prepare for the year ahead, Poconos venues provide everything you need for a successful and memorable gathering. Keep reading to discover ten amazing spots for year-end retreats in the Pocono Mountains.

[French Manor Inn and Spa](#)

This intimate chateau is ideal for exclusive gatherings of up to 25 guests. The stone terrace and rolling lawns at French Manor provide panoramic mountain top views, and the dining room provides gourmet meals and catering. Both the restaurant and the inn have received the AAA Four Diamond Award for over 20 years running.

[Hotel Fauchère](#)

Founded in the 1800s by Swiss hotelier and Delmonico's Master Chef Louis Fauchère, this boutique property still serves up innovative cuisine at its three restaurants and offers a meeting center equipped with cutting-edge technology. The charming small town of Milford, set along the Delaware River, is right outside waiting to delight your attendees.

[The Inn at Jim Thorpe](#)

Immerse your guests in the Victorian elegance of the popular small



French Manor Inn and Spa

town of Jim Thorpe. Located in the heart of the historic district, The Inn at Jim Thorpe offers customized, all-inclusive group packages with two smaller meeting rooms onsite and the potential to use the historic Mauch Chunk Ballroom up the street which can accommodate up to 160 guests.

[Ledges Hotel](#)

Perched next to striking Paupack Falls, Ledges Hotel and its restaurant, Glass-wine.bar.kitchen, offer a meeting backdrop your attendees will be talking about for years. Waterfall views abound on the multi-tiered decks overlooking the river gorge and in the indoor meeting spaces. Ledges can host from 35 to 150 guests and has a professional event coordinator to help planners make sure every

meeting detail is perfect.

[The Lodge at Mountain Springs Lake Resort](#)

As soon as you enter the peaceful and pastoral grounds of Mountain Springs Lake Resort, you'll feel like you've entered a retreat away from the world. Plan an event in the 2,100-square foot lodge with walls of windows that let the outdoors in at any time of year plus delicious catering from a fantastic culinary team.

[The Lodge at Woodloch](#)

Wellness is at the heart of this rustic yet refined award-winning spa which can accommodate groups of up to 14. Expect exceptional amenities such as fine dining and luxurious treatments, with additional meeting facilities available nearby at the Country Club at Woodloch Springs and family favorite Woodloch Pines Resort.

[The Settlers Inn](#)

From the sommelier-selected wine list to the farm-to-table dishes, dining is top-notch at The Settlers Inn, as are the surroundings. Simplicity and craftsman-style artistry are present throughout the 23 sleeping rooms, the 1,770-square-foot Undercroft Room, and the 100-seat dining room.

[Skytop Lodge](#)

Set in the midst of 5,500 acres, Skytop Lodge has been a timeless and elegant area retreat since 1928. The

AAA Four Diamond property boasts a golf course, 75-acre lake, miles of private hiking trails, luxurious accommodations, and 15 meeting rooms including the Evergreen Ballroom, all featuring high speed Internet and the latest in audio/visual equipment.

[Stroudsmoor Country Inn](#)

This full-service event center is tucked away in the scenic hills above Stroudsburg, just a short distance from I-80. Choose from six different stunning event facilities with incredible mountaintop views and a dedicated staff to see to every detail.

[The Swiftwater](#)

The newest luxury hotel in the Poconos, The Swiftwater opened in 2024 and has already been earning accolades including back-to-back AAA Four Diamond Awards. Take advantage of an impressive executive meeting room, a concierge lounge, and the modular indoor/outdoor restaurant and lounge, The Olivet, to wow your attendees.

There's no place like the Poconos for the holidays: why not take a festive day trip this winter to enjoy the season and scope out the possibilities for your events in 2026 and beyond. No matter what time of year your group meets in the Pocono Mountains, top-notch service will ensure your gathering is a success. Head to [PoconoMeetings.com](#) to submit an RFP and explore all the things to do and places to stay and meet in the Poconos.



Skytop Lodge Library Lounge