

I recently retired from GE Healthcare, and had the opportunity to participate in Exhibitions Day, held June 4-5, 2019 in Washington DC as the representative for HCEA (Healthcare Conventions and Exhibitors Association) in the capacity of Past President (2014-2015).

Exhibitions Day 2019 is the sixth annual gathering of more than 100 industry professionals designed to foster relationships and build awareness with federal legislators on Capitol Hill regarding matters paramount to conducting business, facilitating travel to our exhibitions, securing safety and access of face-to-face business meetings, and attracting both international and domestic business visitors. Details on the issues we were all briefed on to discuss with our legislative leaders can be found at <http://exhibitionsday.org/> (Exhibitions Day Issues Brief), so I won't go into lengthy details here, but consisted of four main topics:

- Investing in America's Transportation Infrastructure: making improvements to our airports, highways, passenger rail and transit systems. Currently the U.S. ranks ninth in the world in infrastructure quality.
- Rebranding of H.R. 1996: We urge Congress to rename the "Visa Waiver Program" bill to the "Secure Travel Partnership Act". This program currently has 38 participating countries which secure and expedite international travel for highly-vetted travelers, whom we need to attend our exhibitions and other business meetings to help achieve our economic goals. Renaming, or rebranding, the program will remove the negative connotations currently associated with its current label.
- JOLT Act of 2019 (H.R. 2187): The JOLT Act follows H.R. 1996, and works hand-in-hand to expand the program, renaming the Visa Waiver Program to the Secure Travel Partnership and bringing more participating countries into the partnership. This will help facilitate even more international business visitors.
- Protecting Brand USA: Brand USA is a bipartisan program funded by airline passenger fees and private industry, and markets U.S. travel and tourism overseas. President Trump's FY2018 budget proposal called for the elimination of the funding for Brand USA. Our request was to urge Congress to oppose any measures to defund Brand USA as such a measure would hurt the health of our economy.

Meetings with Congress Representatives and Senators were preloaded into the App by Monday, June 3. In the first-timers' briefing, we had been encouraged to tweet out to our congressmen and women and senators, once we knew with whom we'd be meeting, to say we were looking forward to meeting with them to discuss #ExhibitionsMeanBusiness. As I live in New Jersey, I was scheduled to meet with Congressman Chris Smith from NJ District 4 (where I live), and with Senators Cory Booker and Bob Menendez.

I would like to add that IAEE prepares everyone extremely well, and will pair everyone up in teams of at least two or three, especially the first-timers. I was grateful, as I certainly did not have all the data points memorized. My other colleagues from New Jersey, Scott Walode (Apple Rock Exhibits) and Gabriel Jenifer (Freeman) were not first-timers; and they were excellent

cheerleaders and resources for me as we attended our meetings throughout the day on June 5th.

Additionally, we were coached that we often (and most likely) don't get to meet with the congressperson or senators themselves, but with their staffers. We were advised that this is typical and still a very good thing to get 15 minutes in front of these people, as these are the ones who let our elected officials know how their constituents feel about the issues, what bills we want them to support and/or sponsor, and how we want them to vote. I attended four meetings:

- Office of Donald M. Payne, Jr. (Congressman, 10th District, NJ): Met with Bridgette DeHart, Legislative Director
- Christopher H. Smith, Congressman, Fourth District, NJ (photo op only, as he was headed out to do a speech): Met with Monica Herman, Legislative Assistant
- Office of Senator Cory A. Booker, NJ: Met with Melissa Sanchez, Legislative Correspondent
- Office of Senator Robert Menendez, NJ: Met with Jonathan Tsentas, Legislative Assistant

All four meetings went well. We were well-received by all staffers, who took notes and were receptive and indicated support for our platforms.

Additionally, I was interviewed by CNTV while outside of Senator Booker's office. A brief sound bite was included in their final video, embedded in the article that summarizes the activities of Exhibitions Day 2019 on the TSNN's website:

Article: <https://www.tsnn.com/news/global-exhibitions-day-and-exhibitionsday-rally-industry-support>

Video:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/pxow8z4omq9ikI5/OCCC%20EXHIBITIONS%20DAY%20WRAP%20019%20V2.mp4?dl=0>

Respectfully,

Diane

Diane E. Benson, CTSM Diamond

T: 609.216.8262

E: DianeEBenson@outlook.com



