Roger Dow discusses “Travel’s Next Great Chapter” in State of Travel Industry Address

By Todd McElwee

Roger Dow, President & CEO, U.S. Travel Association, foresees “Travel’s Next Great Chapter.” Delivering the annual State of the Travel Industry Address on January 27 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Dow did not sugarcoat the harm endured by the sector during the coronavirus pandemic but still expressed optimism for a fruitful future while highlighting a series of policy measures to serve as a catalyst for recovery.

“Since March, the U.S. travel industry has suffered more than $500 billion in pandemic-related losses,” Dow said. “Travel industry unemployment climbed to 51%—more than double the national rate at the height of the Great Depression. The social costs of this pandemic have been equally devastating. Americans are less connected, more isolated, and less mobile than ever before. But

Association of Luxury Suite Directors Optimistic of Fans’ Return to Stadiums

By Todd McElwee

Late last month, the NFL announced 22,000, including 7,500 vaccinated health care workers, will attend Super Bowl LV at Tampa’s Raymond James Stadium. And perhaps nobody is happier to see the smattering of fans continue to safely grow as the

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605-Room Omni Oklahoma City Hotel Opens Next to Convention Center

By Grant Broadhurst

On January 26, the $241 million Omni Oklahoma City Hotel opened next to the new $288 million Oklahoma City Convention Center in — you guessed it — Oklahoma City. That’s in OKLAHOMA!

The 605-room hotel is a major addition to the city, which just opened its 500,000-square-foot convention center next door. The hotel has 76,000 square feet of event space of its own.

Larger, Smaller DMOs Receiving PPP Loans While Awaiting Economic Recovery

By Jonathan Trager

Many destination-marketing organizations are receiving PPP loans from the federal government, but few are rehiring laid-off staff with hotel occupancy revenue yet to rebound significantly, according to an informal USAE survey conducted last week.

Typical of respondents were organizations such as the Atlanta CVB, which received a PPP loan of more than $1.35 million, and the San Francisco Travel Association, which received $2.3 million. Atlanta reduced staff by 12, with SFTA reducing its 103-person staff by 68.

The Nashville CVC received $1.1 million and furloughed/laid off eight and brought back two, while Visit Houston has been able to rehire 10 of 33 furloughed staff but not any of the 48 employees laid off.

Visit Houston was able to receive a PPP loan in 2020 through Houston

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U.N. Global Tourism Crisis Committee Promotes Worldwide Vaccine Passport

Numerous Industry Groups Advocate for Travel Via Testing

By Todd McElwee

A vaccine passport is necessary to restart international tourism, the United Nation’s World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Global Tourism Crisis Committee recently asserted during a meeting in Madrid.

The body’s opinion stands in stark contrast to various domestic and international organizations, including the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTCC), which argues comprehensive testing is the immediate way forward for the beleaguered sector.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO, said: “The rollout of vaccines is a step in the right direction, but the restart of tourism cannot wait. Vaccines must be part of a wider, coordinated approach that includes certificates and passes for safe cross-border travel.

In the longer-term, we also need to restore confidence in tourism. The United for Travel campaign will help us achieve this, providing a clear and strong message that safe tourism is now possible.”

The U.N. committee called for:

- Stepping up the coordination, within and frameworks of the International Health Regulations\(^2\), of vaccination certificates to ensure a timely monitoring, definition and implementation of common, harmonized digital related travel principles, protocols and documents.
- Support the standardization, digitalization and interoperability of testing protocols and certification systems, based on commonly agreed evidence and risk-assessment indicators for origin and destination country/territory.
- Support of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s initiative for the development and coordination of a harmonized system in all countries to open borders safely in coordination with World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The implementation of the ICAO CART Take-off Guidance, including the Manual on Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures\(^3\) and establishing Public Health Corridors (PHCs), in order to advance the harmonization of testing protocols requirements.
- Countries to ensure that measures affecting international traffic are risk-based, evidence-based, coherent, proportionate and time limited.
- Opponents of vaccine passports contend the practice could prove discriminatory to those for whom the remedy is currently less available, including citizens of less-developed nations and various age groups. In addition to WTTCC, WHO, International Air Travel Association (IATA) and Airlines for America (A4A) have all voiced apprehension about a vaccine passport, the Washington Post reported.

Gloria Guevara, WTTTC President & CEO, said: “WTTTC wholeheartedly supports the testing on departure of all travellers to ensure passengers can prove they are COVID-19 free and thus avoid the spread.

“It will take a significant amount of time to vaccinate the global population, particularly those in less advanced countries, or in different age groups, therefore we should not discriminate against those who wish to travel but have not been vaccinated.

“Only a tiny percentage of people around the world have so far received the vaccine, whereas there are vast numbers who have not, but who could be tested, show a negative result, and travel safely.

“The commonsense approach is to allow the free movement of people who can prove a negative test result, rather than reserve travelling or jobs for a small minority who have been vaccinated.

“Furthermore, the most vulnerable groups should be prioritized, a blanket vaccination requirement would simply discriminate against non-vulnerable groups, such as Generation X, Z and Millennials, who should be able to travel with proof of a negative COVID test.”

“WTTC has long been calling for an internationally recognised rapid and cost-effective testing regime at departure points worldwide. This would foster understanding.

“Over a century ago, Mark Twain correctly observed: ‘Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness.’ Travel can unite people of diverse backgrounds and connect Americans in meaningful ways. Our industry can play a critical role in helping to bring Americans together again and help our nation heal.”

The complete address and video presentation is available at ustravel.org.

State of Travel continued from page 1

tavel’s story is far from over. Today, we are coming together to launch travel’s “Next Great Chapter.” This chapter will be fueled by innovation, tenacity and focus… built by the remarkable men and women of our industry who are rising to meet this moment.

After thanking the industry for its resolve and efforts to combat the pandemic Dow said: “Now we all must work together to write the next chapter. Our goal is not simply to recover what we’ve lost … but to rebuild an industry that’s even better positioned than before the crisis … one that’s more globally competitive … more innovative … and more unified. This is the opportunity for a new Congress and new administration to work with our industry to revitalize our nation’s economy, restore millions of lost jobs, and bring Americans together again.”

Dow pointed to a policy platform designed to accelerate a travel recovery. Proposals fall into five categories:

- Economic recovery
- Investing in infrastructure and the future of mobility
- Increasing global competitiveness

Roger Dow
This Looks Like a Job for… When a computer glitch recently caused a serious backup at a COVID-19 vaccination site in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, Mayor Will Haynie knew who to call to fix the hour-long wait at his local TV station. Not Superman, not Batman, not Ghostbusters, and not even the physical embodiment of the American Spirit known as Uncle Sam. No, Mayor Haynie sent up the waffle fry signal to call local Chick-fil-A manager Jerry Walkowiak. “Your city doesn’t deserve you,” HOTS imagines Mayor Haynie saying in a low and dramatic voice, “but it does need you.” And Walkowiak answered the call. He used all his professional drive-thru management skills to set the backed up line to rights. HOTS looks forward to the movie adaption and subsequent cinematic universe.

*****

Tail Rooms, Big Ideas… According to HOTS’ favorite newspaper, the new Omni in Oklahoma City has a whole floor designed to meet the extra-tall needs of pro basketball players. The rooms on the 17th floor have taller ceilings, bigger door frames, larger beds, and even higher showerheads. That got HOTS thinking. First, wouldn’t football linebackers also like such oversized rooms? They’d probably be happy to pay a bit extra. And baseball players could… Well, they could stay in a normal-sized room. But HOTS thinks there’s a hidden yet untapped market: People of average height who want to feel like they’re as tall as an NBA player. A hotel could build an entire floor of rooms to scale so that a person who is 5’6” would feel like they’re 7 feet tall in a normal hotel room. Sure, it’d be a tad inconvenient, but guests would get to feel like giants, especially if the hotel only hired very short staff to manage the floor. Maybe the hotel could even have a basketball court built to scale (complete with smaller basketballs) to really sell the experience. Food could be served on smaller plates with smaller silverware. After experiencing that, guests of average height would probably be more thankful that they don’t have to hunch over just to take a shower.

*****

Another Super Bowl is on the horizon, and (surprise!) Tom Brady is making yet another appearance in the Big Game. So it’s timely that HOTS read that an autographed rookie card of the Hall of Fame quarterback rated in “virtually perfect” condition has been auctioned for just under $556,000. UPI reported that the mind-boggling bid for the 2000 Playoff Contenders card was made during an auction that ended on eBay on January 25. According to PWCC Marketplace, which listed the item, the card is “what we personally believe to be the single most important modern football card ever produced.” For that staggering sum, HOTS sure hopes so!

U.S. Travel, Airline Associations Applaud Biden’s Travel Mask Mandate

By Grant Broadhurst

Flying soon? Now it’s a federal rule – not just a company policy – to don a face mask for the flight. The same applies for many other forms of public transportation.

On January 20, newly inaugurated President Joe Biden signed an executive order requiring various agencies with regulatory power take immediate action to require masks in airports, commercial aircraft, trains, public maritime vessels such as ferries, intercity buses, and other forms of public transportation.

U.S. Travel and airline associations expressed support for the mandate.

The agencies do have some leeway in terms of allowing exceptions, such as to make sure they comply with applicable law. The order did not address how the order would be enforced. U.S. airlines and Amtrak have already required masks but dealt with noncompliance.

Roger Dow, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, said: “We also strongly support the president’s mask mandate for interstate travel, which is in line with the industry’s health and safety guidance and consistent with what countless travel businesses are already doing to protect travelers and workers.”

Nicholas E. Calio, President and CEO of Airlines for America (AAA), told USAE in a statement: “We appreciate the Biden Administration’s decision to implement a federal face covering mandate for all domestic modes of public transportation, including airports and commercial aircraft. The safety and well-being of passengers and employees is always the top priority of the U.S. airlines. We recognize that face coverings are a critical measure in our multi-layered approach to protecting the traveling public, which is why U.S. airlines have been vigorously enforcing face covering requirements since April 2020. U.S. airlines have been supportive of a federal mandate as an additional layer of support and welcome the Executive Order, which will strengthen our flight crews’ ability to enforce face covering requirements for the duration of the pandemic.”

Faye Malarkey Black, President and CEO of the Regional Airlines Association, told USAE: “We are strongly supportive of the mask mandate. Our members’ flight and cabin crews are already enforcing mask policies and we believe a federal mask mandate reinforces the steps airlines and their essential workers are taking to keep passengers and crew safe during the pandemic emergency.”

Ryan Waguespack, SVP of the National Air Transportation Association (NATA), told USAE: “[NATA] is supportive of measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus and build public confidence in the travel industry. Our membership base, comprised of on-demand air charter, fixed base operators, and other business aviation organizations, is uniquely positioned to provide a safe, secure, and clean travel experience in which the public can rely. The Biden Administration’s mask mandate goes hand-in-hand with existing CDC guidance for the use of PPE for international travel.”
The 165-room AC Hotel Scottsdale North opened on January 21 in Scottsdale, Az., near shopping and entertainment in Kierland Commons and Scottsdale Quarter. The hotel also has a 500-square-foot meeting room. Shown here is the hotel’s team celebrating the opening.

By Todd McElwee

Examining the business landscape and challenges event professionals face during the pandemic, MPI, in partnership with IMEX Group and MGM Resorts International, is seeking feedback on innovation, sustainability and wellness via the Industry Recovery Survey: Renewed Focus on Innovation, Sustainability and Wellness. MPI will keep the survey open through the end of this week with results coming in the near future. “In order to gauge the business landscape and the challenges for event professionals during the pandemic, MPI needs your feedback on innovation, sustainability and wellness,” IMEX’s e-mail distributing the survey noted. “The meeting and events industry has seemingly advanced five years in a few months in 2020. The result for some has been a lot of compressed, forced innovation.” The survey asks for input on matters such as innovation. It delved into desired products/services from suppliers; how respondents have innovated during the COVID-19 pandemic; impediments to employing innovation and technologies and more. Social impact and sustainability questions delved into diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), green, community and cultural initiatives respondents. The section included, “When we return to live events, how important will social impact and sustainability elements be for the events you plan?” with five levels of importance listed.

Wellness is also on tap. Questions include: “How often during a typical business trip do you work out?” and “Would you purchase a room upgrade to have fitness equipment in your room?” Inquiries concerning times of sessions, equipment used and more are included.

The survey is available at mpi.org/tools/coronavirus/5.

**ALSD**

*continued from page 1*

Association of Luxury Suite Directors (ALSD).

On February 3-4, the association will look at the industry’s current and future climate during its virtual Sports Sales and Service Training Forum. The in-person ALSD Conference and Tradeshow scheduled for August 15-17 in Las Vegas.

Bill Dorsay, Founder & Chairman, ALSD, told USAE, most stadiums are operating at about 25% capacity. One cannot paint with a broad brush though as gathering policies vary greatly from one state and municipal-ly to another. Optimistically, he went on to say, the numbers rise soon with full capacity possible by summer. ALSD is expecting roughly 500 for the Sports Sales and Service Training Forum. The agenda reflects the challenges membership has faced during the pandemic while providing a buoyant view of the opportunities ahead. February 3’s ALSD Welcome Training Session: Shifting Sales in Difficult Times features Allison Schuller, Vice President, Training & Strategy, Tyson Group.

“What skill do an NFL quarterback, an air traffic controller, and a Navy SEAL team member have in common?” the agenda said of the session. “And why is that skill critical for a successful sales team? With a nation struggling to go back to ‘business as usual’ in a no-contact era, the ability to pivot has never been more important.” Slated for ARIA Resort & Casino, Dorsay said ALSD is expecting upward of 2,000 for August’s face-to-face event. More than 100 exhibitors will be onsite. Dorsay said ALSD has done some work with CVBs, but not a great deal. He added that may change as stadiums and arenas are opening up to a more diverse lineup of events and clients, not just their regular tenants.

ALSD was established in 1990 to provide a single platform for its member teams and venues with accurate and timely information from across all layers of the premium seat industry in stadiums and arenas throughout North America with a growing global reach. Saying, “membership is comprised of all sides of sports and entertainment venue development and represented by all corners of the $10 billion premium seat and corporate hospitality marketplace,” the association lists 1,500 members from 15 leagues/categories, 3,500 unique online users and 1,000,000 seats and suites.

More information is available at alsd.com.

**Omni**

*continued from page 1*

He also said that the street between the hotel and convention center is controlled, great for pedestrians, and a 20,000-square-foot ballroom, a 4,500-square-foot outdoor event area, and meeting areas.

The hotel’s overall design is inspired by the countryside that surrounds Oklahoma City and features earth tones, wood, metal, and chevrons in carpets, guest rooms, and meeting areas.

“The hotel is gorgeous,” Burns said. “I’ve been to quite a few Omnis and this is certainly the crème de la crème.”

Peter Strebeltl, President of Omni, said: “Each of our hotels are unique to the community, and Omni Oklahoma City Hotel is no different with a top-to-bottom design that authentically conveys the welcoming spirit of the city.”

The 17th floor is also designed specifically for visiting basketball teams. To more comfortably accommodate the height of pro NBA players, the rooms feature taller ceilings, higher showerheads, bigger doors, and California King beds.

Omni Oklahoma City Hotel is no different with a top-to-bottom design that authentically conveys the welcoming spirit of the city.”

The 17th floor is also designed specifically for visiting basketball teams. To more comfortably accommodate the height of pro NBA players.

**Vaccine**

*continued from page 2*

avoid exporting the virus and aid the restoration of international travel.” At the present time, do not introduce requirements of proof of vaccination or immunity for international travel as a condition of entry as there are still critical unknowns regarding the efficacy of vaccina-
tion in reducing transmission and limited availability of vaccines,” the WHO said at a recent meeting, the Post reported. “Proof of vaccination should not exempt international travellers from complying with other travel risk reduction measures.”

IATA is encouraging speed and a focus on risk management stating: “Our mindset must be focused on managing the risks of the virus while maintaining the overall well-being of the population. That would be a shift from current government policies entirely focused on risk elimination until a vaccine is available and at any cost to people’s lives and livelihoods. Even with recent encouraging news, it will be well into 2021 before we can expect large scale vaccination. In the meantime, denying people the freedom of mobility will do irreversible damage to jobs and our way of life.”

Writing to former Vice President Mike Pence, AAA urged for a “global program to require testing for travelers to the U.S.,” the letter said. “However, we also know that additional vigorous action is needed in the months ahead to bring the virus under control.”
The homeless shelter at the San Diego Convention Center will remain in place throughout March now that the city council approved extending it on January 26.

By Jonathan Trager

The San Diego Convention Center will continue to house homeless individuals through March under its Operation Shelter to Home program. Credit: City of San Diego

GBTA Survey Finds Travel Spend Dramatically Less Than 2019

By Todd McElwee

Travel spend is projected to decline dramatically in 2021, a recent Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) poll finds. Conducted January 11-18, 90% of travel managers and procurement professionals say their company’s travel spends will be less this year than in 2019.

The survey, which received 733 responses, also found 29% of companies have begun planning to host employees returning to the office by August (Q3).

“While we continue to face challenges for our industry, there is light at the end of the tunnel and projections for a return to some normality remain positive for Q3,” said Dave Hilfman, interim Executive Director of GBTA. “The global roll out of vaccination programs continues to be a key driver in restoring traveler confidence, but uncertainty remains around traveler requirements for a return to business travel, whether this be pre-testing, testing on arrival or proof of vaccine. GBTA will continue to lobby on behalf of members for clarity and a consistent approach among governments.”

This year’s travel budget for firms will be 52.44% less (mean) than 2019: 1% predicted an increase with 3% remaining the same and 6% not sure.

Ten percent of participants expect employees to return in nine months or longer with 26% reporting they have not decided. GBTA said plans to resume non-critical business travel follow a similar trajectory as returning to the office. 6% report their company has resumed non-critical business travel. 13% of GBTA members expect employees to resume non-critical business travel in the next 1-4 months and 29% expect a resumption in 5-8 months. Additionally, 20% have not made a decision.

Concerning sentiments towards the vaccine, GBTA said: “The vaccine continues to be at the forefront of the recovery plan. When asked to assess comfort with allowing employees to travel for business if certain travel industry workers — such as flight attendants, pilots and hotel employees — are classified as essential workers (which could allow them to receive their vaccination before the general population), a majority say it would. Two-thirds (64%) of GBTA members would.”

Ten percent of participants expect employees to travel for business if certain travel industry workers would make them ‘somewhat’ or ‘a great deal’ more comfortable. One in four (27%) said it would make them ‘a little bit’ or ‘not at all’ comfortable and one in ten (9%) are unsure.”

GBTA’s COVID-19 resources are available at gbta.org.

PPP Loans

continued from page 1

First Corporation, staffing company, Convention and Cultural Services, Inc., and has applied for a second draw this year. So far, the group has received almost $4.2 million.

The majority of respondents also said there has been little to no rebound in hotel occupancy tax revenue.

Some expressed sentiments such as John Groh, President & CEO of the Rockford Area CVB in Illinois, which received funding of more than $200,000. He wrote that occupancy tax revenue “has ‘new’ normalized to an extent.”

“By that I mean, April was awful, May was very bad, June was bad, and it remains bad,” said Groh. “Until widespread vaccine adoption/use and return to travel, I think we are going to stay where we are at. Hoping things improve by summer.”

One southern CVB that received $1.3 million (which requested not to be identified) reported that although hotel tax revenues have improved since the second quarter of 2020, the late fall surge in positive COVID cases has caused that to level off. All furloughed staff have returned, but 11 positions “were vacated through layoff, retirement, and/or attrition and were not rehired.”

Some DMOs representing major convention destinations, including Visit Orlando, Choose Chicago, VISITPittsburgh, and the Greater Boston CVB, declined to provide data for the survey.

Destination DC didn’t provide data but offered a statement from President & CEO Elliott Ferguson: “I’m extremely pleased that as a 501(c) (6) organization, Destination DC is now able to apply for a PPP loan for the first time as it will be a lifeline for our organization. Our staff is our most important asset. It’s their well-being that keeps me up at night and PPP will provide critical funding for us to maintain staff and operations. As the tourism industry continues to be one of the hardest hit, I’m happy to continue working with U.S. Travel Association as they have tirelessly impressed upon Congress the need for relief. In DC alone, visitor spending is down $4.9 billion year-over-year, and it will be a long road back, but this support for our industry is a critical step.”
The Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center $1 billion expansion project is underway. The transformed venue incorporates ASM Global's VenueShield environmental hygiene protocol to provide the highest levels of cleanliness and safety. And with Visit Lauderdale's Safe + Clean Pledge you can be assured that hotels, restaurants, attractions and other businesses are going above and beyond to keep your attendees safe.

The expanded convention center opens in phases beginning in October 2021 with full completion anticipated in 2024. Be among the first to reserve your meeting space between 2021 and 2024 and it could be free. Learn more about our $10 million in free meetings space offer at sunny.org/meetings
The Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center $1 billion expansion project is underway. The transformed venue incorporates ASM Global’s VenueShield environmental hygiene protocol to provide the highest levels of cleanliness and safety. And with Visit Lauderdale’s Safe + Clean Pledge you can be assured that hotels, restaurants, attractions and other businesses are going above and beyond to keep your attendees safe.

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Learn more about our $10 million in free meetings space offer at sunny.org/meetings
Massachusetts Authorizes Tourism Destination Marketing Districts

By Jonathan Trager

Massachusetts is poised to see the creation of Tourism Destination Marketing Districts (TDMDS) that will help fund efforts to lure more visitors and spur economic recovery from the pandemic.

The enabling provision was included in legislation Gov. Charlie Baker signed on January 15. TDMDS still must be ratified by the hotel community and municipal government entities within the borders of the district.

Martha Sheridan, President & CEO of the Greater Boston CVB, called the move “a game-changer for the destination.”

“There is still work to be done towards creating our district, but this is a crucial development and the state legislature really stepped up,” said Sheridan. “We recognize the vital work of [House Ways and Means Committee] Chairman Michlewitz and [Second Assistant Majority] Leader Moran in shepherding this through and, of course, Governor Baker for signing it into law.”

Hotels in the districts will assess up to a 2% fee on room charges, pool the money collected, and spend it to attract more visitors.

A TDMD will encompass both Boston and Cambridge. The Boston CVB says 62% of hotels with 50 or more rooms in Boston and Cambridge must vote to approve the district, as does the Boston City Council and Cambridge City Council.

“Speaker Mariano and the Leadership understood the urgency of this moment, and how desperately our industry needs new modes of funding,” said Dan Donahue, Chairman of the CVB. “We appreciate their efforts and are also grateful to Senator President Spilka and Chairman Rodrigues for their support.”

Mary Kay Wydra, President of the Greater Springfield CVB, told USAE the bureau “is extremely pleased that this important legislation passed and allows for a new funding source.”

“We are looking forward to working with our hoteliers and our municipal governments on this initiative,” said Wydra. “We anticipate forming a district that will generate additional revenues to market our destination and strategically drive room nights to increase occupancy in Western Massachusetts.”

Don CeSar in St. Pete Beach, Florida in the “Pink” Again

Renovation Completed

By Grant Broadhurst

The Don CeSar opened in 1928. Its new look leans heavily into the old 1920s charm that earned it the nickname: Pink Palace.

The 277-room Don CeSar has finished a three-year, multi-million-dollar renovation of its exterior, meeting spaces, corridors, guest rooms, Beach House Suites, retail, lobby bar, dining options, pool bar, and palm-lined front drive. Essentially, almost all the hotel saw modernization and enhancements that still retain and restore the hotel’s classic feel.

“As an extremely unique independent beachfront property, the complete revitalization of the Don CeSar offers meeting planners classic old Florida with a wonderful modern twist,” Todd Gehrke, Director of Sales & Marketing at the hotel, told USAE.

“arbity design, Gehrke said: ‘The décor includes beautiful blues and swooping designs highlighting the connection to the gulf waters and the hotel’

Throughout it all, the history of the hotel has been retained. Gehrke said: “The hotel rooms, restaurants, meeting rooms, and common spaces have all been transformed with a classic feel reminiscent of our 1928 grand opening. However, all spaces are modernized for today’s sophisticated traveler.”

Thomas Fraher, General Manager of the Don CeSar, said: “Through the decades, The Don has been a luxurious respite from life’s many challenges. We’re thrilled to revive and honor this prestigious landmark, and also offer a stunning gathering place for visitors to reconnect at a time when rejuvenation is most important.”

Supreme Court Ends Emoluments Battle Against Trump

By Grant Broadhurst

Now that Donald Trump is no longer President, lawsuits he violated the emoluments clause of the Constitution are now moot; thus sayeth the U.S. Supreme Court.

On January 25, the high court sent two lawsuits against Trump back to the lower courts with instructions to dismiss the cases as moot. The lawsuits had alleged Trump violated the emoluments clause of the Constitution when his businesses — especially the Trump hotel in Washington, D.C.— accepted business from foreign governments and other officials.

One of the cases came from the Attorneys General of D.C. and Maryland. The other involved Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) as well as restaurants and hotels in New York and D.C.

The ending of the lawsuits leaves the central question — whether a payment for a hotel room or ballroom owned by the President constitutes an emolument — unsettled. The Supreme Court did not provide any explanation for its decisions, which were given in a routine orders list. No dissenting opinion was mentioned.

Attorneys General Karl Racine of D.C., and Brian Frosh of Maryland said: “Our case proves once again that in our country no one — not even the President of the United States — is above the law.”

A lower court had ruled in favor of the Attorneys General.

The Attorneys General also said their work “will help stop anyone else from using the presidency or other federal office for personal financial gain the way that President Trump has over the past four years.”

Noah Bookbinder, Executive Director of CREW, said: “Only Trump losing the presidency and leaving office ended these corrupt constitutional violations and stopped these groundbreaking lawsuits.”

Deeptak Gupta, an attorney who worked with CREW on the case, said on Twitter: “SCOTUS just dismissed our Emoluments Clause litigation against Trump as moot. (We agreed it was now moot so that’s no surprise.) It’s disappointing that Trump ran out the clock. But I’m proud of the work we did to ensure the Constitution’s anti-corruption norms weren’t forgotten.”
Ron Bower Tapped to Head Up Sioux City Regional CVB

By Jonathan Trager

Ron Bower has been named Destination Manager for Tourism of the Sioux City Regional CVB, a fledgling operation located in Iowa close to the Nebraska and South Dakota borders.

Bower, who previously served as Sports Sales Manager at Visit Eau Claire in Wisconsin, said he thinks the job at the start-up organization is “a great opportunity not only for me professionally but for me personally.”

“This is where I’m supposed to be,” he told USAE. “It’s kind of a smaller town but it feels like a big city.”

Bower, 52, said the destination is “definitely a sports town,” with ongoing tournaments such as the NAIA Division II Women’s Basketball National Championship scheduled for Feb.-March. The area also has many locally owned restaurants, he added.

Andrew Niles, Executive Director of the North Sioux City Economic Development Corporation and CVB board member, said the bureau “is fortunate to have someone of Ron’s caliber to build the organization from the ground up.”

“Afiera an extensive search process, it was clear that Ron is the right person to lead the SCRCVB into the future,” he said. “The board is confident that Ron’s leadership will result in new tourism, events, and economic growth in the Siouxland region.”

Bower has been in the tourism industry since 2012, promoting destinations in Ohio, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. He holds an MS in marketing and communications and a BS in business administration from Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio.

Bower is a comic book collector, 1980s music and movie buff, and a Cleveland sports fan. He and his life partner, Tim, have a cat named Kluber (after the former Cleveland Indians pitcher).

“It’s an exciting time to be a part of the growth and revitalization of Sioux City,” Bower said. “My goal is to continue building tourism and making Siouxland a national destination.”

Construction to Start Next Year on Wisconsin Center Expansion

By Jonathan Trager

Construction on the major expansion of the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee will kick off in about one year, according to the firm overseeing the project.

The Wisconsin Center District (WCD), which operates the Wisconsin Center, received an update on the project at a board meeting on January 22. Mike Abrams, Sr. Director at CAA Icon, said construction will begin in early 2022, possibly in January.

Peggy Williams-Smith, President & CEO of VISIT Milwaukee, said the organization is “thrilled that the $420 million expansion of the Wisconsin Center is moving full-steam ahead.”

“The demand for HSMAI members and stakeholders to connect has been profound during the crisis,” Robert Gilbert, CHME, CHBA, President and CEO of HSMAI, said. “We believe this mix of virtual and face to face programs represents both the opportunity to learn and exchange best practices that will help our members lead the recovery for their hotels and hotel companies.”

HSMAI Americas will host its springtime events virtually including the HSMAI Top 25 Extraordinary Minds Awards Celebration on March 16, the HSMAI Adrian Awards Celebration on March 23, the HSMAI Mike Leven Chapter Leadership Conference on March 29-30, and the Curale Global Executive Insights Forum in May.

Then in the Fall, HSMAI plans three in-person HSMAI Commercial Strategy Events: the Marketing Strategy Conference in Dallas, Texas, on September 29; and the HSMAI Sales Leader Forum in October at a location to be announced later. HSMAI will host Executive Roundtables at these events as well. The events will bring sales, marketing, and revenue optimization under one umbrella.

HSMAI plans other online education including a continuation of its six-week Hotel Essentials Online Certificate Courses, which can be used to prep for the exams required to earn a CHDM or CRME. These courses will regularly be held throughout the year on the topics of Hotel Digital Marketing Essentials, Hotel Revenue Optimization Essentials, and Hotel Digital Sales Essentials.
More than 1,100 facilities worldwide have completed the GBAC STAR™ Facility Accreditation Program from the Global Biorisk Advisory Council™ (GBAC), a Division of ISSA. In late January the association said the roster included 866 hotels, 77 convention centers, 37 arenas, 16 airports and more. "As the novel coronavirus pandemic demonstrates, infectious disease can spiral out of control when we're ill prepared," said John Barrett, Executive Director, ISSA. "With GBAC STAR accreditation, we're giving facilities the tools to prepare for, respond to, and recover from outbreaks so they can protect their customers and employees, even during times of uncertainty." Rosen Hotels & Resorts in Orlando also announced it earned accreditation for its three convention properties as part of a heightened focus on associate and guest safety and security - Rosen's Total Commitment. Newly minted meetings and hospitality venues include the Fort Worth Convention Center as well as dozens of Hyatts sprinkled across the world such as the Hyatt Regency Phoenix, Hyatt Place Salt Lake City Downtown at the Gateway, Hyatt House Scottsdale/Old Town, Hyatt Place Houston NW Vintage Park and Hyatt Place Dewey Beach in Delaware. Salt Lake City's Little America Salt Lake Hotel and The Grand America Hotel were also listed. Salt Lake City's Discovery Gateway Children's Museum and Red Butte Garden and Arboretum were the first venues of their kind to be accredited. Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, home of the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Pistons; Will Rogers Memorial Center in Fort Worth; and Riverside Theater in Milwaukee were also designated. The Rosen Shingle Creek, Rosen Centre and Rosen Plaza were credentialed. "While no amount of money can truly buy one's health or happiness, we are dedicated to identifying and obtaining the best resources available for preserving the health and safety of our most-valued associates and guests," said Harris Rosen, President/COO, Rosen Hotels & Resorts. "This decades-long commitment may have become more relevant due to the recent pandemic; however, we have never wavered from this focus. Guests and associates are considered extended family. Providing to them this peace of mind is something we consider vital for a safe and enjoyable experience at our hotels." Launched in May 2020, the GBAC STAR program assesses a facility's preparedness and provides staff with training for biorisk prevention and containment. It also establishes a framework for communication and sharing of best practices. To achieve accreditation, facilities must demonstrate compliance with the program's 20 elements, which range from standard operating procedures and risk assessment strategies to personal protective equipment and emergency preparedness and response measures. Facilities apply online and provide all documentation and supporting evidence with their application. The GBAC STAR Accreditation Council determines the status of all GBAC STAR facilities. "The goal of GBAC STAR accreditation is twofold. First and foremost, it helps protect frontline employees and cleaning staff from biological risks," said Patricia Olinger, GBAC Executive Director. "It also gives the public confidence to enter these accredited facilities knowing that they understand how best to clean, disinfect, and prevent infectious disease outbreaks." For more information about the accreditation, visit mbac.org/star. USAE publishes a list of accredited facilities in each week's digital issue at usaenews.com.

Accor and Faena Partner to Spread Faena Luxury Hotel Brand Around the World

By Grant Broadhurst

Accor and Faena announced they are partnering on a new venture to expand the Faena luxury hotel brand to "strategic destinations" around the world, starting with Dubai. Faena currently has luxury hotels in Miami Beach and Buenos Aires, Argentina. Faena specializes in creating "Faena Districts" that include hotels, residences, and cultural drawings. "As Faena expands, we plan to continue rethinking hospitality lifestyle and shaping the path for groundbreaking concepts, setting new industry standards in the creation of inimitable environments rooted in culture, positively transforming cities, shifting outdated paradigms and becoming new international cultural epicenters," Alan Faena of Faena Group. "Faena Districts are shifting the gravitational centers of the cities where they reside, making a true difference in their communities. These will serve as our model as we work hand-in-hand with the Faena team to help achieve their vision and global expansion ambitions," Sébastien Bazin, Chairman and CEO, of Accor.

German Airline Lufthansa Now Requires Medical-Grade Masks on Flights

By Grant Broadhurst

While it’s been a common practice for airlines to require masks on flights, Lufthansa – Germany’s largest airline and Europe’s second-largest — is kicking it up a notch. Effective February 1, Lufthansa Group is requiring that passengers and crew wear medical masks on flights to and from Germany. In other words, cloth masks won’t cut it. Instead, surgical masks, FFP2 masks, and KN95/N95 masks are required when boarding, flying, and disembarking. Lufthansa originally started requiring masks last May. “In principle, infection on board is very unlikely,” Lufthansa said in a statement. “All Lufthansa Group aircraft are equipped with the highest quality air filters, which ensure air quality similar to that in an operating theater. In addition, the air circulates vertically instead of being dispersed throughout the cabin.” Passengers may get an exemption from the requirement if they have medical reasons they cannot wear the mask. However, a medical certificate on a Lufthansa form and a negative COVID-19 test are required.

STR Forecast

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indicators should be visible in Q2, we expect Q3 to be the point where leisure travel shifts into high gear and corporate and group business show more progressive improvement. That will feed into a 2022 that shows a higher level of recovery.”

Adam Sacks, President of Tourism Economics, said: “While the recent COVID-19 surge has made for a challenging start to the year, our expectation that a strong rebound in travel activity will occur in the second half remains intact. As we emerge from the stiffest periods of the public health crisis and virus-related conditions, our collective appetite for travel will kick-start the recovery.”

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Updated 11/16/2020

Italicized DMOs do not have representatives that reside full time in the DMV area.
It’s time to plan meetings. In Puerto Rico, you and your attendees can explore turquoise deep dives, non-virtual happy hours and safe ways to connect. And with numerous ways to utilize our pristine beaches, mountains and rainforest as your event backdrop, planning a meeting in Puerto Rico will be as stress-free as our Island. Learn more at DiscoverPuertoRico.com/meetings.
This is my boy, Ralph Herbert Walker, or Ralphie for short. Ralph is a two-year-old border collie/Australian Shepard mix. We adopted him as a baby from the NJ Puppy Rescue, an organization who rescues litters of puppies from high-kill shelters from all over the country. Ralph loves playing frisbee, just recently discovered he adores snow and takes any opportunity he can get to play with his three human siblings. He’s specially trained and is in the process of becoming a therapy dog. Before the Pandemic, Ralphie loved going to the TMG office to visit his extended family.

Sent in by Lauren Schoener-Gaynor, Director of Marketing and Communications, Talley Management Group, Inc.

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