

the official newsletter of the pcma capital chapter

## Government Meetings...What now?

The past 10 years have been volatile to say the least for government meetings, causing a ripple effect on all meeting markets. There were scandals, perceived scandals, cancelled meetings, often at high costs, dumped meetings for fear of public scrutiny and knee-jerk reactions were en vogue. Suddenly government meetings were in the limelight and agencies didn't want to be headline news. Association meetings dependent on government participation were put on a wait-and-see status as the industry had no idea what to expect.



The dust has settled and what has come out of the rubble?

According to Jill Denning, Per Diem Program Manager with the U.S. General Service Administration's (GSA)'s Office of Governmentwide Policy, the primary element is transparency. Agencies have flexibility to travel and book meetings; however, they will be audited so they need to get it right. Federal Agencies have to follow the rules outlined in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) as well as their agencies' internal travel policies; while agencies cannot contradict the FTR, some agencies are more detailed and restrictive than others when it comes to how the rules are implemented.

Another rubble bi-product is M-12-12, a memo written by the Office of Management and Budget to ensure wise use of tax-payers' dollars. Agencies were required to reduce travel spending by 30%, starting in fiscal year (FY) 2013. While M-12-12 will officially expire at the end of FY2016, transparency will remain intact.

Per Diem rates? Each year GSA surveys the average daily rates in counties across the U.S. and first develops a standard rate for the continental U.S. Envision standard rate as the

background color on an artist's canvas. Other "colors" are added for the specialized non-standard areas, of which there are nearly 400 nationwide. The FY2016 standard rate increased to \$89. The specialized non-standard rates vary greatly, increasing to \$300+ in NYC during the winter months and to \$200+ in places like DC and San Francisco. Both standard and non-standard rates are now evaluated yearly and potentially

reviewed mid-year if agencies let GSA know of places where they struggle to book per diem. GSA's 25% above per diem conference lodging allowance no longer exists; however, if government employees must meet in a city where per diem isn't available, the individual employee can be reimbursed up to 300% above per diem if the agency authorizes it in advance of travel. No other special compensation is made for attendance at higher-priced association meetings; something to consider as you book meetings at which federal employees must attend. FY2016 did welcome a much needed increase in F&B per diems in many locations.

A great deal has happened over the past decade and although we don't have a crystal ball to see the future, we do have transparency to see what is happening today. A valuable outcome to be sure! •

by Marilyn Atchue-Zuill, Global Account Director, HPN Global  
and Jill Denning, Program Manager,  
Per Diem Program, Office of Governmentwide  
Policy, U.S. General Services Administration

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**Mission:** The mission of PCMA and the Chapter is to be the leading organization for meeting and event professionals by delivering superior and innovative education and promoting the value of professional convention management.

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*If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to write an article for The Chatter, email: [PCMAchatter@gmail.com](mailto:PCMAchatter@gmail.com)*



## Message from the Board

*John Rubsamen*

*Director of Meetings and Events  
 Americans for the Arts*



Being a part of the Capital Chapter of PCMA gives us the unique opportunity to have a large impact on how government, both locally and nationally, view the Meetings Industry as a whole. Our members are not only a part of the Washington, DC region, but represent just

about every major city and state across the country (as well as several international cities). Our region is one of the largest hubs of Non-profit, Government, and Corporate Meeting Professionals in the United States, while serving as a major meetings, events and tourism destination itself. These elements, recent legislation, and the perception of the Meetings Industry give the Capital Chapter a call to action!

In recent years, increased scrutiny of (and shifting perception of) our industry has led to new government and private sector restrictions, legislation, and policies that have reshaped the way many of us do business. The effects on every aspect of our industry continue to be felt, from individual hospitality employees to the economies of entire cities. As a result, our industry is standing up and showing how “Meetings Mean Business” and so much more. But it takes an army, and that’s where we need you, our members, to help!

In 2015, members of the Meetings Industry joined together to create the first annual North American Meetings Industry Day. Events were held across the United States and Canada to advocate both locally and nationally for the impact that the Meetings Industry has on all communities. It was a huge success! Participants quickly realized that this was not just an issue in North America, but a global issue. As a result, on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016, we will welcome the first Global Meetings Industry Day. Events will be held around the world, hosted by multiple organizations within our industry, and will include initiatives from Meetings Mean Business as well as the Convention Industry Council, along with several other global organizations.

I am proud to say that the Capital Chapter of PCMA, along with several local industry organizations, will host the Washington DC Global Meetings Industry Day events at the Omni Shoreham on April 14, 2016. Make plans now to join your colleagues from around the world as we advocate for the enormous impacts our industry makes, not only on the economy, but on the progress of every industry, innovation and movement imaginable around the globe. We look forward to seeing you there! Watch your e-mail and Facebook for registration details! •



## Connect with the Capital Chapter!



Connecting with the Capital Chapter is not just about tracking what we are up to. We want to see what you are up to as well.



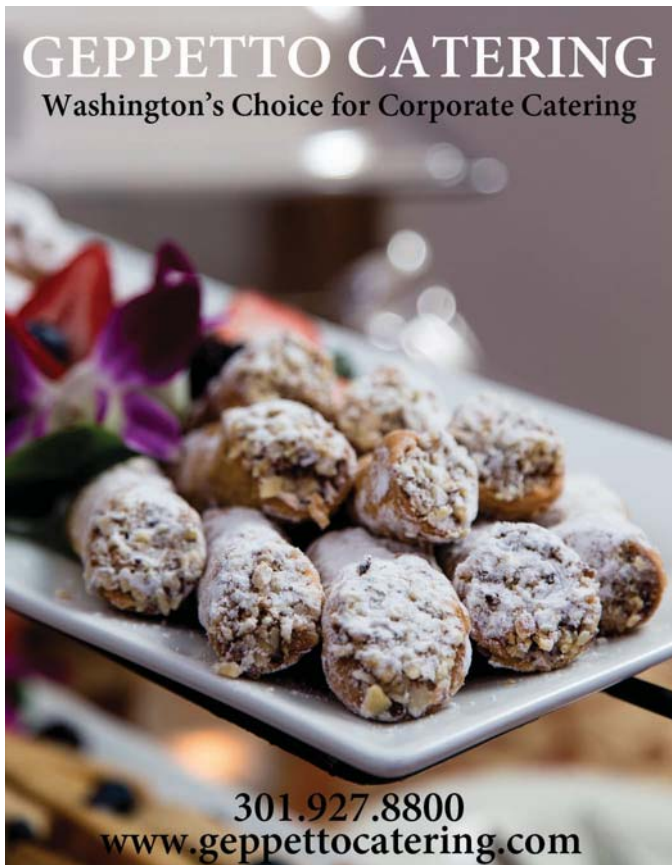
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PCMA Capital Chapter has become the first PCMA chapter to have an Instagram account because we believe in being creative and having fun with our communication. However, it is only as good as our members make it, so start shooting and posting today!



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## Creating an Influence (Advocacy vs. Lobbying)

Advocacy and lobbying are words that come to mind simultaneously when we are discussing issues pertaining to the community as a whole. These concepts are intricate and interchangeable topics, and it's important to understand the difference.

Advocacy, by definition, means "the art of pleading for, supporting or recommending." Lobbying, by definition, means "a group of persons who work or conduct a campaign to influence members of a legislature to vote according to the group's special interest."

An article published by Charity Lobbying for the Public Interest states, "When organizations advocate on their own behalf, they seek to affect some aspect of society, whether they appeal to individuals about their behavior, employers about their rules, or the government about its laws. Lobbying refers specifically to advocacy efforts that attempt to influence legislation."

Where the overlap occurs, according to Carr, Riggs and Ingram, LLC, is that "(l)obbying always involves advocacy, but advocacy doesn't necessarily involve lobbying. The key to determining whether an activity is considered lobbying or advocacy depends in part on the audience an organization is trying to influence. Questions to consider include:

- Does the audience of an organization's efforts make the laws or simply follow and enforce them? If the audience makes laws and the organization is attempting to change legislation by encouraging these lawmakers to vote a certain way, then it's lobbying. If the organization is speaking with an administrative official or other non-lawmaking individual or group about a broad policy change, then it's advocacy.
- Does the organization want these individuals to vote a certain way on proposed legislation or simply be more aware of issues? Promoting a point of view and providing public education aren't considered lobbying activities — even if the organization is speaking with a public official. The discussion crosses the line only when specific legislation is discussed or a particular vote is influenced."

The above statements and questions helped to clear my confusion on these concepts. Also chief among my lessons learned was that public engagement and awareness are critical to the success of any advocacy effort. We must all be united, informed and committed to making change. •

—by Rosa Mendoza-Friedheim, CASE, CDMP, Regional Director of Sales - Mid Atlantic, Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau



## Lobby Days – The Voice of America

Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence decisions made by officials in the government, most often legislators. It's like making a sale. State officials are our customers and we, the people of the United States of America, are there to influence those legislators towards our goals. Its common everyday working men and women, not paid lobbyists, who participate in Lobby Days, wanting to make a difference in things that most affect their lives and professions.

I interviewed Dayna Ramos with the CA State University Employees' Union to learn more about Lobby Days. They conduct theirs yearly in April, a time when most legislators are working. Delegates are invited and before face-to-face time with legislators, the delegates are prepared. They spend two days becoming fully aware of their organization's position and the relationship it maintains with other organizations and legislature. They get to know their legislator and staff; who they are, what they do and an understanding of where they stand on issues. Staff members are equally as important as they are a way to gain access to elected officials. Delegates become familiarized with the issues, learn to prioritize them, present them in their own words and know those of their opponents and how to combat them in a positive manner. They learn how to best present themselves, how to dress professionally and to follow up with a thank you letter, reiterating the issues and actions to be taken. CSUEU chooses to dress all delegates in matching shirts with CSUEU logo to be seen as one united voice with strength to make a difference. It's important to say that no taxpayer money can be used to support these efforts so CSUEU has established a Political Activities Committee (PAC), funded by donations to support Lobby Day efforts.

Personal engagement yields a much greater punch than letters, emails or phone calls and you, as an individual, can be a part of something that does make a difference. It's like Dr. Seuss' "Horton Hears a Who..." When the last person in Whoville joined his voice with the others, the Whos of Whoville were heard. •

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*by Marilyn Atchue-Zuill, Global Account Director, HPN Global*

## Planning Government Meetings Requires Skill and Ongoing Education

Meeting professionals specializing in the government sector can find it challenging to navigate an ever-evolving set of rules. Jesse Strauss, CMP, CGMP, GVEP, Senior Meeting and Event Planner for Strategic Analysis, Inc., has worked with agencies within the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. As president of the National Capital Chapter of the Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP has nearly 3,000 members nationwide), she shares with us her insight into the government meeting space.

*What do you see as challenges or opportunities for government meeting planners?*

The last few years presented challenges as many government agencies drastically increased the bureaucracy required to provide oversight while simultaneously reducing the number of face-to-face meetings. This was a knee-jerk reaction to the scrutiny from Capitol Hill and the various scandals. The market has begun to even-out. Agencies have had time to review policies and update them to streamline the approval processes while still providing adequate oversight. In addition, there is still a need to meet face-to-face and provide in-person training. Certified Government Meeting Professionals are the key to designing and managing cost-effective meetings that achieve their Agency's goals and objectives.

*Has the role of a government meeting professional changed or evolved since you began 13 years ago?*

The rules of engagement for government meetings have changed significantly and often in the last ten years. In addition to being effective meeting planners, today's government meeting professionals need to be well-versed and up-to-date

with the latest rules and regulations and understand how their own Department or Agency interprets and enforces those guidelines for hosting meeting and conferences.

*Do you encounter any differences among government agencies in terms of RFP requirements, i.e., what a planner needs to know about working with one agency versus another?*

Absolutely. Each agency or government department has its own guidelines. They are empowered to interpret Federal rules more strictly, and in many cases, they do so. Unfortunately, there is no master chart of differences. We learn about each individual client by asking a lot of questions!

*How do GSA requirements and per diems affect your RFP or decision making process?*

We include specific contracts clauses in our RFPs so the hotels are aware of our requirements as government planners. For example, in all hotel contracts for federal clients, we add the statement 'Rates quoted are at the prevailing federal government per diem. At the time of event, the prevailing federal government per diem will apply' to protect our groups if the per diem rate were to change.

*What's the level of experience that you're seeing in new members of SGMP?*

As the president of the National Capital Chapter of SGMP, I see a varied level of experience in new members. Many new members, suppliers and planners, are seasoned in the industry, but new to the government market. SGMP provides that education and networking specific to working with local, state, and federal governments. •

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*by Phil Rappoport, VP, Chief Marketing Officer,  
AgendaPop Mobile App*



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## Major Hotel Brands & What You Need to Know in 2016

If you aren't familiar with the House of Sweden, you might have images of a cable network reality show. But you'd be missing one of DC's spectacular venues where the PCMA Capital Chapter kicked off its first educational program of the year.

A great panel of industry veterans included Peter O'Brien with Marriott, Chris Perry with Hilton, Cecilia Bell with IHG, Ken Slattery with Omni, and Nate Hardesty with Hyatt. Along with Moderator Vicki Johnson of Vicki Johnson & Associates, the panel shared company overviews on luxury and lifestyle brands, resort collections, signature brands and modern essentials. We learned new names such as Andaz, Moxy, Curio and hotel Indigo. While each of these companies offers a variety of experiences, when it comes to evaluating group business, we heard very similar tunes.



As Vicki shared, it may feel like RFP's are fed into a machine behind a black curtain which whirls and snorts, making noises like something you'd find in "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory". A Revenue Manager declares a room rate for the program and then disappears behind the scenes before you can blink. In reality, hotels are challenged by owners and management companies every day to make the best business decisions possible, maximizing revenue while providing attendees with a great guest experience. Hotels have lost several revenue streams over the years (phone charges, in-room coffee, mini bars, movies) and the current tug of war seems to be between planners and hotels on complimentary Wi-Fi.

The key elements of how hotels qualify business and the economics behind rate and fee structures are calculated by reviewing these common points:

- ◆ Rooms-to-Space Ratio
- ◆ Historic Spend, Ancillary Spend and Additional Revenue Streams
- ◆ Time of Year, Peak vs. Off Season
- ◆ Room Block Pattern Management
- ◆ Hotel Budgeted Room Rate and Food and Beverage Targets
- ◆ Multi-Year Opportunities

After a lively discussion, the consensus is that the key words for 2016 are "COMMUNICATION" and "FLEXIBILITY". Both planners and suppliers are encouraged to be transparent in their discussions, and communicate with their CVB and NSO team. By sharing and understanding the needs on both sides of the table, we can pull back the curtain on business evaluation and find great solutions as true partners. •

*by Mary Kreins, CASE, National Sales Director,  
Disney Destinations*





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## Courage at Work: Bravery as an Overlooked Resource!

The word courage is such a huge concept and can be translated into so many examples. I looked up the official definition of courage; I did not want to assume I knew. I looked up synonyms for courage, so that I could embrace all the related concepts. I researched examples of courage and what made individuals exceptional through that process.

“Afrontar” is a Spanish word which means to confront, to deal with, to face. I believe this is what we encounter daily more often than we care to admit in a variety of situations.

Today’s workplace is where we spend a tremendous amount of time cultivating our skills, engaging in a community of thinkers and leaders, trying to get a seat at the table, showcasing our abilities and hoping someone will notice, or simply to just keep a job and security. Whatever your circumstances, ask yourself the following questions: What does courage look like for you? How do you define it for yourself?

The truth is, we will not get advance notice to be prepared for courage, and too often, it will be our convictions and ethics that will be tested. “Be willing to make small stands or mistakes, it will only better your outcome.” Whatever the challenge, remember.....!Afrontar! •

by Sheryl Brannon Lewis-EL, CMP, MBA, Strategic Management, Event and Program Development Strategist, Strategic Partnerships Internaional, LLC

*6:31PM*  
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## Newly Revamped Mix N Bowl a Success

The amiable chatter of industry networking mixed with squeals of delight and groans of defeat greeted you as you entered Pinstripes Georgetown, the new central location of the PCMA Capital Chapter's annual Mix N Bowl event.

This year's revamped event offered all an enjoyable evening of bowling, bocce, networking, and a little friendly competition. Attendees were able to easily move thorough out the venue from the animated bocce arena to the posh bowling alleys, while stopping to smile for cameras in an interactive photo booth along the way.

Competition was fierce all around, but in the end two stellar teams rose to the top. Will Trokey and Ned Blair once again led team Visit Charlotte to their second straight victory in the bowling tournament scoring 773 points, while team Visit Indy gave them a run for their money through the gallant efforts of the tourneys highest scoring bowler Rick Tedrick with NRA Foundation. Team Visit Seattle cleared the field in the first annual bocce tournament, going undefeated and holding their competitors to a combined total of less than 7 points.

A heartfelt thanks goes out to the events program sponsor Visit Charlotte and venue sponsor Pinstripes Georgetown without whose support the event would not have been possible.

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*by Sara Haywood, CMP, Director Strategic Projects, American Association of Geographers*

### First Place Bocce Tournament Winners: Team Visit Seattle

Pictured here (left to right) Shannon Burke, National Association for College Admission Counseling; Diane Kovats, International Society for Computational Biology; Alison LaFollette, Visit Seattle; Kireem Swinton, Visit Seattle; Rob McCulloch, Conference Direct)







## Community Service Alert!

Join us for two fun volunteering opportunities with two great organizations and also get the opportunity to network with your peers:

### K Street Farm

**Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup> - 3-5pm**

Rake, dig, plow, prep, and plant! Help revitalize the K Street Farm gardens in support of DC Greens, our 2015 Charity of the Year. Their mission is to support food education, food access, and food policy in the District of Columbia. Seeking 20-30 volunteers to get "down & dirty!"

### USO Pack for Troops

**Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup> - 9-1pm**

Join us for a fast-paced project assembling care packets for our U.S. Military troops in the MD, DC, and Northern VA area. We will gather in Crystal City between 8-9am before boarding buses to Ft. Belvoir for this popular networking activity. We can accept a maximum of 75 volunteers.

Registration details forthcoming!

Peter O'Brien

2016 Community Service Chair



## Member Spotlights

### Spotlight on a Planner

*Shannon Burke, CMP*

*Director of Conferences and Meetings  
National Association for College Admission  
Counseling*



While working as a graphic designer for a small government contractor, she caught the planning bug after going onsite to a meeting in San Francisco. She started her time in the industry at the Northern Virginia Technology Council. She then spent a number of years at the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Shannon's passions include fitness, travel, and pop culture. In 2013, she decided to improve her personal fitness by completing a certain number of races and building on that goal every year since. After injuring herself early in 2016, she decided to tackle another fitness goal - training for a triathlon by getting back into the swimming pool. Another passion of hers is travel. Shannon likes to incorporate family visits into her trips, and has some great choices since her parents split their time between Virginia, Florida, and Idaho, and she has extended family in Europe. Her passion for television and movies focuses on their storytelling aspect. She is high on the Marvel trend, especially strong-female centric shows like Jessica Jones and Agent Carter. Some of her other favorites are comedies like Jane the Virgin, Superstore, and Life in Pieces. •

*by Will Trokey, CMP, National Sales Manager,  
Visit Charlotte*

### Spotlight on a Supplier

*Paul Zalocha, CMP*

*Director of Sales and Marketing  
The Westin Georgetown*



Paul Zalocha's interest in meetings and tourism started many years ago. Growing up in Upstate New York, he worked in a family-run restaurant. He loved it and decided he wanted his own one day. Later, during his senior year at Florida International University, Marriott convinced him that catering was the best direction to take. Joining

Marriott's team, Paul found that he enjoyed the event side of the industry, which has become a twenty-year career. As a Marriott Director of Catering, he worked in Houston, Boston and Washington, D.C., joining Starwood for the opening of The Westin Arlington Gateway.

Paul also spent some time as a Meeting Planner, and he and his wife Barbara ran a Bed and Breakfast, which ultimately launched her personal chef business.

Four years ago, Paul began selling and marketing The Westin Georgetown. He still likes the guest contact, the fast pace, the interesting people, and he says he needs that contact every single day!

Paul runs "Destination Marathons" in places like New York, Paris, and Honolulu. He flies in to the destination, runs, and spends a week or so exploring. He also enjoys reading and herb gardening.

Joining PCMA in the mid-1990s, he obtained his CMP. "I was part of a study group", Paul remembers. "Then I realized how many connections you make through PCMA. The networking is invaluable. We're lucky the local D.C. chapter is so robust. It's almost impossible to not get involved in some chapter effort."

If not engaged in hotel sales and marketing, Paul says he could be a financial adviser (he has a big interest in investing), which would still satisfy his need to be in the business of helping people. •

*by Jacqueline K. Mongold, CMP, Assistant NRA  
Secretary, National Rifle Association*





## News Bytes

Email your news: [PCMAchatter+news@gmail.com](mailto:PCMAchatter+news@gmail.com)

### On the Move:

**Andrew Ortale** left National Trade Productions to become Vice President of Industry Services with the American Gaming Association.

**Karen Miller, CEM** left National School Boards Association and is now the Exhibit Operations Director at The Optical Society.

Coulter Companies founder, **Thomas Coulter Gibson**, has been appointed Chief Executive Officer, MCI USA.

**Erin M. Fuller, FASAE, CAE** will serve as President, MCI USA Association Management & Consulting.

**Blake Kottenbrink** has been appointed President of MCI USA's luxury experiential events division.

**Shawn L. Pierce** has been tapped as President, SEM for MCI USA. Pierce brings proven leadership in developing businesses powered by delivering strategic event solutions.



## Mark Your Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events. Visit our chapter website for details and to register:

[www.pcma.org/connect-and-grow/chapters/capital](http://www.pcma.org/connect-and-grow/chapters/capital)

**3/10 Capital Classroom: Food Trends & Allergies: How To Work with the Chef**  
5:00 PM – 8:00 PM  
Hotel Monaco DC, 700 F Street, NW, WDC

**3/18 Capital Chapter K Street Gardens: Community Services Project 2016**  
3:00 PM – 6:00 PM  
K Street Farm, 111 K Street, NW, WDC

**4/14 Global Meetings Industry Day**  
Joint event with PMPI  
2:30 PM – 5:30 PM  
Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert St NW, WDC

**4/19 USO Pack for the Troops**  
8:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
USO Fort Belvoir, 9th St, Fort Belvoir, VA, 22060

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