

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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IMPROVED WORK RULES AND EXPANDED CUSTOMER RIGHTS RESULT IN ANOTHER MAJOR BOOKING AT THE PENNSYLVANIA CONVENTION CENTER

National Black MBA Association Will Return to Philadelphia in 2017

Philadelphia, PA...June 17, 2014 – On the heels of a recent announcement by the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) that the group would be returning to Philadelphia for its 2018 conference as a result of changes at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, another group has signed to bring its conference back to the city. The National Black MBA Association (NMBBAA) today announced the selection of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Convention Center as the host city for its 2017 Conference and Exposition. One of the nation's largest professional employment and development conferences, the event attracts executives, entrepreneurs, students and high-profile speakers. The NMBBAA selection of Philadelphia comes as a direct result of historic work rule changes and expanded customer rights at the SMG-managed Pennsylvania Convention Center (PCC).

According to the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (**PHLCVB**), the primary sales and marketing arm for the Center, more than 8,000 attendees are expected to attend the NMBBAA Conference, using 10,541 total hotel room nights to generate more than \$19.5 million in economic impact for the Philadelphia region.

"Philadelphia has been on our radar since we last held our conference there in 2003. The city's prime location along the east coast, its growing minority business community and its wealth of attractions, among other things, creates an ideal backdrop to host some of our nation's top professionals" said Jesse Tyson, President & CEO, NMBBAA. "With more customer-friendly work rules now in place at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, we are pleased to be bringing our Conference & Expo back to Philadelphia in 2017."

Philadelphia was initially awarded the NMBBAA conference for 2014 but due to concerns about labor, a decision was made by the organization to delay bringing the meeting to the City. In late 2013, following the appointment of SMG as facility managers, Philadelphia was given another opportunity to bid for 2016 but lost despite SMG's successes at the Center. The new work rules, expanded exhibitor rights and industry best practices implemented at the facility last month, provided the **PHLCVB** and the Center an opportunity to renew discussions with the group.

"Bringing NMBBAA back to Philadelphia could only have been achieved with these customer-focused changes," said **PHLCVB** President and CEO Jack Ferguson. "The **PHLCVB**, alongside SMG and the Convention Center continue to move forward diligently in pursuing any and all opportunities to fill our convention calendar for the coming years."

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The announcements by AIHA and NBMBA came following an outreach event in Washington DC hosted by the **PHLCVB**, SMG and the PCC to inform meeting planners about the changes at the Center. Additional events are scheduled to take place in major markets within the upcoming months and the joint marketing campaign, **PHL: Here For The Making** is being activated in key trade publications to detail these changes.

"The efforts made to improve the customer experience and lower customer costs are resulting in a rebirth of the Pennsylvania Convention Center as one of the premier convention center facilities in the nation," said Gregory J. Fox, Chairman of the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority's Board of Directors. "The NBMBA's decision to come to Philadelphia is a welcome expression of well-placed confidence in the Center. As the Center's Board of Directors continues to monitor progress on its reform initiatives, the Board is pleased and honored to receive this great news, expresses its appreciation to the NBMBA, and applauds the efforts of the Center's CEO John McNichol and General Manager Lorenz Hassenstein of SMG, and thank the sales and service teams at **PHLCVB** and the Center."

"The cohesive and willing labor teams, when combined with the streamlined work jurisdictions and expanded work rules, are receiving very positive feedback," said Lorenz Hassenstein, the Center's General Manager for SMG. "The customers and prospects who have long waited for improvement view these changes as very positive. These steps allow us to make good on our promise of growing the hospitality industry here in Philadelphia."

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*Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (**PHLCVB**), www.discoverPHL.com, a private non-profit membership corporation, is the official Tourism Promotion Agency for the City of Philadelphia globally, and the primary sales and marketing agency for the expanded Pennsylvania Convention Center. The **PHLCVB** competes with its counterparts worldwide for convention and tourism business. The organization has departments dedicated to the multicultural, sports, and life sciences markets. The **PHLCVB** incorporates the short code PHL, an open source graphic identifier for the City of Philadelphia into the Convention & Visitors Bureau brand identity. The graphic identifier and other assets for use by public, private and non-profit organizations can be found at www.PHLpartners.com.*