



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW JERSEY

EST. JUNE 2007

16TH ANNUAL **BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

Sheraton Edison, Edison, NJ

Accredited State Chamber
of Commerce with Distinction

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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PROGRAM

16TH ANNUAL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Registration & Networking Breakfast

Video - "The Chamber Opens Doors" An Overview on the AACCNJ

9:00 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.

9:50 a.m. – 9:55 a.m.

Welcome Remarks & Introduction of Dignitaries

John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, Founder, President, and CEO

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ)

9:55 a.m. – 10:05 a.m.

Welcome Remarks

Rev. Steffie Bartley, Sr., Sr. Pastor, New Hope Baptist Church
Northeast Regional Director, National Action Network (NAN)

10:05 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Sponsorship Recognition

JPMorgan Chase, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ, United

10:20 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Panel 1

Banking on the future: Piloting Equitable Access to Public & Private Capital

Moderator: John E. Harmon, Sr.

Kayin Barclay, Senior Vice President, Advantage Capital

Michelle Bodden, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, NJEDA

Sadiera Crawford, Vice President, J.P. Morgan Chase

Jorge Sam Cruz, Executive Director -New Jersey Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC)

10:40 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.

Lunch

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Special Guest Speaker

The Honorable Ras Baraka, Mayor City of Newark, NJ

12:30 p.m. – 12:40 p.m.

Keynote Speaker

Kenneth L. Harris, Ph.D., 16th President & CEO, National Business League (NBL)

12:40 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

Video – "The Chamber Changes Lives...Success Stories"

1:10 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Panel 2

Positioning for Opportunities in the Public Sector

Moderator: Dr. Denise Anderson, Ph.D., MPH, CEO, Denise Anderson & Associates

Stephen Dilts, Chief Operating Officer, NJ Turnpike Authority

Paul F Sprewell, Esq., Director, Division of Civil Rights and Affirmative Action

Commissioner, NJ Department of Transportation

Melanie Walter, Executive Director, NJ Housing & Mortgage Finance Association

1:20 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Panel 3

Embracing Change & Digital Transformation

Moderator: Nadine Jones, Legal Strategist, Media Contributor & DEI Thought Leader

Rebecca Darling, Director Community Affairs & Partnerships, Coreweave

Tony Lowman, Chancellor, Rowan University

Derrich Phillips, President & Founder, Aspire Cyber

2:10 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.

Closing Remarks

John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM

2:55 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

1 ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

EST. JUNE 2007



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EST. JUNE 2007



Letter from the **PRESIDENT**

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Distinguished Guests,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, Inc.'s 16th Annual Business Leadership Conference on September 23, 2026, at the Sheraton Hotel in Edison, New Jersey. This year's conference comes at an important moment for New Jersey and our nation. Black businesses, professionals, entrepreneurs, workers, and families continue to confront economic pressures that affect opportunity, wealth creation, and disposable income. Access to public and private-sector contracts, capital, supply chains, leadership opportunities, and career advancement remains an important part of the broader conversation about economic inclusion.

New Jersey's own statewide disparity study provides substantial evidence for this discussion. The study reviewed more than 1.2 million records and 240,000 contracts and found statistically significant disparities involving minority-owned businesses, including Black-owned businesses, across construction, professional services, and goods and services contracting. These findings underscore the importance of moving from recognition of disparities to measurable strategies that expand meaningful participation.

The AACCNJ serves as a voice and advocate on socioeconomic issues affecting New Jersey's Black community and business enterprise. Our Business Leadership Conference provides a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas that can lead to best practices and meaningful outcomes for businesses and communities throughout our state.

We are honored to have Dr. Kenneth Harris, President and CEO of the National Business League, contributing to this important conversation, along with special guests Mayor Ras J. Baraka of the City of Newark and Rev. Steffie Bartley, President of the National Action Network, New Jersey Chapter.

The 2025 gubernatorial election also demonstrated the significant participation of Black voters in New Jersey. Publicly reported exit-poll data indicate that approximately 94% of Black voters supported Mikie Sherrill. As we engage the new administration and public- and private-sector leaders, the AACCNJ will continue to advocate for policies and strategies that address documented disparities and improve access to economic opportunity. This is a time for diligence, engagement, accountability, and collective action. Our equitable stake in New Jersey's economic future is grounded in the contributions, talent, entrepreneurship, and civic participation of generations of Black New Jerseyans.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, panelists, volunteers, sponsors, partners, and everyone attending this year's conference. Your commitment makes this dialogue possible.

Let us continue the conversation, strengthen collaboration, and work toward an economy in which qualified businesses and talented people have meaningful opportunities to compete and prosper.

Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder, President & CEO
African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ



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NEW JERSEY**

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with Distinction**



September 23, 2026

Dr. John E. Harmon
President and Chief Executive Officer
African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey
379 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08618

Dear Dr. Harmon,

As the State's principal agency for economic development, NJEDA works with stakeholders across New Jersey to implement programs and initiatives that drive economic growth, fuel entrepreneurship, and expand access to opportunity. Through this work, we seek to build stronger communities, create pathways to good jobs, support the growth of small businesses, and strengthen New Jersey's long-term prosperity.

NJEDA and African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) collaborations on initiatives including the Small Business Bonding Readiness Assistance Program and the AACCNJ Transformation Center reflect our shared commitment to helping businesses build capacity, access resources and capital, and position themselves for growth.

As the 16th Annual AACCNJ Business Leadership Conference convenes to bring together business and community leaders for conversations on equitable access to capital, public sector opportunities, business growth and competitiveness, and other issues critical to strengthening New Jersey's business community and expanding economic opportunity, NJEDA looks forward to continuing our collaborations and building on this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E Weiss", is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Evan Weiss
Chief Executive Officer
NJEDA

2026 PRESIDENT'S CLUB



SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION

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NTRANSIT

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About the AACCNJ

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders, to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic

diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.



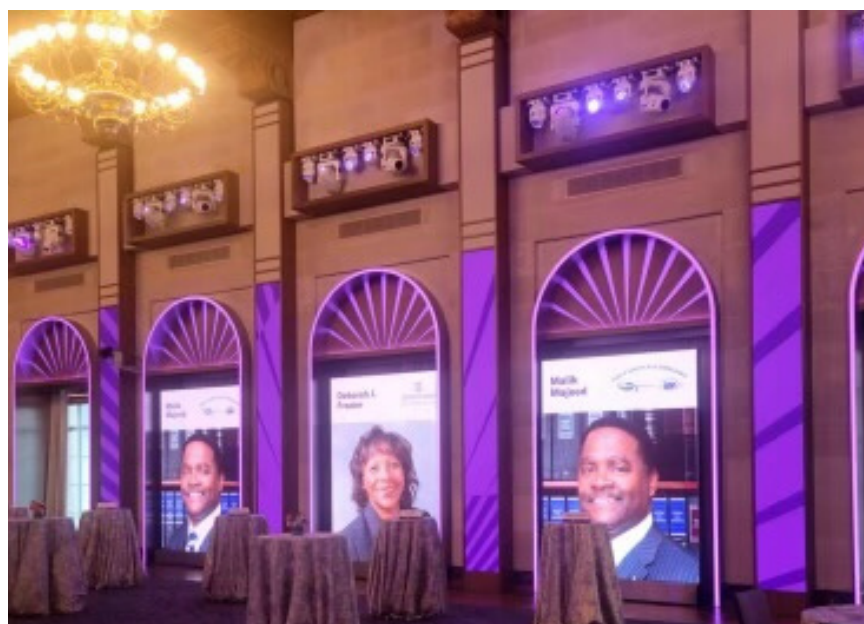
November 23, 2022, The United States Chamber of Commerce awarded the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey with its Accredited State Chamber with Distinction designation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community.

"Chambers of commerce that achieve an Accreditation designation are truly leaders in their industry," said Raymond P. Towle, U.S. Chamber Vice President, Federation Relations and IOM. "This rigorous review includes all aspects of a chamber's policies, operations, and programming. When chambers of commerce earn the distinction of becoming Accredited, it is a mark of excellence for the organization, its staff, and its leadership. Accredited chambers are recognized for their ability to serve as a resource to their region's businesses while maintaining transparent governance practices, sound financial controls, safe work environments, effective communications, and value in programming. They are commended for their continued advocacy of free enterprise, and for their commitment to serving members and their local businesses. Congratulations on this tremendous accomplishment."

In **March of 2019**, The United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC) awarded the AACCNJ with three stars Accreditation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community. **The Chamber joins the top 3 percent of all chambers in the nation who are Accredited as both the only accredited Chamber in New Jersey and the only African American Chamber in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce federation to hold this distinction. With approximately 7,000 chambers in the U.S.,** Accreditation with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is a prestigious honor that distinguishes the high quality, expertise, and strong leadership displayed by Accredited state and local chambers of commerce. In **November of 2022**, the USCC granted the AACCNJ a reaccreditation status with; Statewide Chamber with Distinction. **In October of 2025, the AACCNJ remained New Jersey's only Accredited Chamber or Business Organization, as declared by the largest business federation in the world, the USCC.**

"We are extremely delighted to share with our members and supporters the recent designation awarded by the United States Chamber of Commerce to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, of its reaccreditation status "State Chamber with Distinction", said John E. Harmon, Sr., Founder, President & CEO. "The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey is the only Accredited Chamber of Commerce or Business organization in our state - what a significant achievement for the dedicated staff of professionals and Board of Directors."

IN 2022, THE AACCNJ RECEIVED A PERFECT SCORE IN COMMUNICATIONS & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT FROM THE USCC.



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) Inc. was established in 2007 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, B2B (business-to-business) organization in Trenton, New Jersey. The Founder, President and CEO of the AACCNJ is: John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM., jharmon@aaccnj.com Telephone (609) 571-1620

Serving more than 900 active members, the AACCNJ has become a central beacon for minority and non-minority advocacy building, community and government relations, business development, job retention, and education attainment. The Chamber serves as a mechanism for communication, program creation, and strategic implementation of initiatives and resolutions that help build New Jersey's economic landscape.

To date, the AACCNJ has advocated on behalf of its members on several capital development and procurement projects to insure inclusion. The AACCNJ is a conduit to:



Bridging gaps between the **under-performing populations** in New Jersey and a vital resource to initiating dialogue leading to strategies that address the state's overall competitiveness.



Workforce and development training, job-readiness programs and recruitment services.



Free enterprise activity for **Women, Veteran and Minority-owned business.**



Access to resources in making statewide businesses visible in key markets.



An open line of communication with state and local government officials, and suppliers.



Youth mentorship and entrepreneurial programs.

AACCNJ LOCATIONS

Carnegie Center Building
35 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

379 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08618
(Headquarters)

Transformation Center
165 West Hanover Street
Trenton, NJ 08618

Mill One
1 North Johnston Avenue
Hamilton, NJ 08609

ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1

The AACCNJ's new Transformation Center was made possible through the exceptional generosity of Nexus Properties, whose affiliate, Seven One Plus, LLC, gifted the 26,800-square-foot facility to the Chamber. Dante Germano, Managing Member of Nexus Properties, played a key role in facilitating this contribution and ensuring the building could become a long-term asset for the community. This transformative investment is further supported by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) and strengthened through a formal partnership with Rowan University, which will provide educational programming, workforce-development opportunities, and collaborative initiatives.

2

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) and Rowan University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an academic presence for Rowan at the AACCNJ's new hub, The Transformation Center, in Trenton. This partnership aims to expand educational and training opportunities in the region by integrating Rowan's resources with the chamber's business-focused center.

3



AACCNJ "Pathway to Success" wins Two Bronze Telly Awards in the 2025 Competition. Bronze Award DEI Category for (2) Season Six Episodes.



4

TDI secured more than \$2 million in program funding to strengthen workforce pathways for populations facing systemic barriers — including justice-impacted individuals, people directly or indirectly impacted by the opioid epidemic, and New Jersey veterans, women and historically marginalized populations seeking high-growth careers in manufacturing and supply chain logistics.

5

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), in partnership with the Administrators Network, proudly hosted the inaugural Educators of Color Symposium on June 6, 2025, at the Crowne Plaza in Princeton, NJ. The event brought together a dynamic community of educators, thought leaders, and advocates dedicated to advancing equity and excellence in education.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Gary Mann, CEO, Jasfel Analytics, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Marcus Dyer, Principal, Withum, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Tammeisha Smith, CEO, Dunbar Center, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Robert Johnson, Esq., Officer, Chief Diversity Officer, Corporate Group, Gibbons P.C.,

has been recognized by his peers in the 2026 Edition of The Best Lawyers in America®

Schnearia Ashley, Senior Vice President, Commercial Banker, Truist, was appointed to Governor

Shapiro's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs

Tanya L. Freeman, Esq., Co-Founder, Black Business Unblinded, Chair, NYSBBA, named to BINJE's 2025

Best Health Care List Chairs: Chair of the University Hospital Board of Directors



LEADERSHIP & STAFF RECOGNITION

Jacqueline E. Baptiste – ROI Influencers People of Color 2025

Jacqueline E. Baptiste – ROI Women In Business 2025

Mary Griffin - Received SDDC Advocate Award

Carmen Gates – Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Carmen Gates – Appointed to the Board of Contact of Mercer County

Vivian Harmon - Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Vivian Harmon - Served as a panelist for Future Ready NJ with NJ Council of County Colleges

Bydeia Harmon – Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Nyanpu Kerkulah - Joined staff as a full time Program Director

Khadir Williams - Joined staff as a full time Program Coordinator

Demetra Alston - Promoted to Employment and Outreach Services Coordinator

MEMBER BENEFITS

ALL MEMBER BENEFITS

- Radio Show
- Membership Spotlight
- Monthly members only virtual call with the President
- Member Events Posted on Website - Free promotion of events, ribbon cuttings and services
- Complimentary Regional networking at AACCNJ events
- Dual membership with the US Chamber of Commerce
- Trade specific Roundtables
- Quarterly meetings
- Annual meeting
- Meeting With A Member of Membership Acquisition Team
- Assistance with MBE/MWBE/SBE/DBE Certifications
- Member Resume Portal
- Q&A opportunities with state and local officials and corporate representatives
- Pro Bono Alliance - Pro bono legal services *Annual revenues of \$500,000 or less.
- Ability to post jobs
- Access to RFP opportunities
- Opportunity for referrals and resources for potential opportunities
- Access to members only, promotions and discounts
- Complimentary website development
- Complimentary monthly ROI reports

MEMBERS LV2 - LV5 (\$2,500-\$7,500)

- Spotlight in Magazines
- Guest on RVN TV
- Priority Scheduling as a Quarterly meeting Presenter
- Priority Scheduling as panelist for AACCNJ events
- Standalone social media promos

MEMBERS LV6 - LV9 PLUS PRESIDENT'S CLUB (\$10K AND ABOVE)

- Pathway to Success TV appearance
- President club Roundtable Participation
- Unlimited promo shares on social media
- Company name and logo on AACCNJ website
- Recognition at the AACCNJ Annual meeting
- Supplier Chain Diversity
- High level networking and access to unique opportunities
- President club breakfast during BLC
- Support on Legislative and Public Policy matters

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS



Gary Mann

Chairman, AACCNJ Board of Directors
President & CEO, Jasfel Analytics



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM

Founder, President & CEO
AACCNJ



Tammeisha D. Smith

Vice Chair, AACCNJ
CEO, Dunbar Center, Inc.



Marcus Dyer, Esq.

Treasurer, AACCNJ
Associate, Withum Smith & Brown



Robert L. Johnson, Esq.

Secretary, AACCNJ
Partner, FBT Gibbons

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Jemia Kinsey Singleton
President/Chief Communications Officer
Kinsey Communications



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Corporate Shared Services
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Founding Partner,
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Thom Webster
Chief Executive Advisor
2020 Business Advisors

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Truist Commercial Banking



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Individual Broker Channel Sales
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Delta Dental of Connecticut



Faye Coleman
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Stacey Kavanagh
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Market Manager
Provident Bank



Wendy Lanski
Director, Enterprise Vendor
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Bill Stephney
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Viviana Lamm
CEO
Risk Strategy Solutions



Ralph D. Weaver
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Lawrence Wooten
Senior Manager, Supplier Diversity
American Water



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Founder & CEO, Denise Anderson
& Associates (DA&A) LLC



Tasha Youngblood Brown, MBA, CISA
Managing Director
EY

DISPARITY STUDY TASK FORCE



Marcus Dyer, CPA, JD
Treasurer, AACCNJ
WithumSmith+Brown, PC



Tanya Freeman, Esq.
Chief Strategy & Policy Officer, AACCNJ
Founder & Managing Partner
Tanya Freeman Law, LLC
Chair, NY State Black Business Alliance



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Founder, President, & CEO
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CEO, Jasfel Analytics



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Tammeisha Smith
Vice Chair, AACCNJ
CEO, Dunbar Center, Inc.



Robert Warrington, Esq.
Former Vice-Chair, AACCNJ
Founding Partner, Dawkins &
Warrington Law Group, LLC

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Deiredra Oliver
Senior Branch Manager
Visions Federal Credit Union
Saddle Brook, NJ

<https://www.visionsfcu.org/locations/saddle-brook>



Edward Roberts
Founder & Owner
Prep Boyz LLC/ Buggin Out
Pest Control

<https://www.bugginoutipm.com/>



Nadine Brown
CEO
N&R Divine Cleaning
Services LLC

www.nrdivinecleaning.com



Pauline Lloyd
Founder & Executive Director
Albert Islay Walden
Education Alliance, Inc.

<https://www.islaywalden.org/>



Kim Leiby
Business Development
The Lerepco
IT Group

<https://www.lerepco.com/>

AACCNJ STAFF



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder,
President & CEO



Jacqueline Baptiste
Executive Advisor to
President & CEO
& Brand Ambassador



Mary Griffin, PMP, IOM
Vice President of
Membership
Retention & Programs



Nicole Baptiste, IOM
Vice President,
Membership Acquisition
& Financial Management



Carmen Gates
Vice President of Community
Development and
External Affairs Officer



Tanya Freeman, Esq.
Chief Strategy & Policy Officer, AACCNJ
Founder & Managing Partner
Tanya Freeman Law, LLC



Bydeia Harmon
Community
Development Officer



Vivian Harmon
Executive Director
Training & Development
Institute



Nyanpu Kerkulah
Deputy Director
TDI & HEEJI



Tammy Holloway
Senior Membership &
Program Specialist
NYSBBA, AACCNJ



Demetra Alston
Program Director of Outreach and Workforce
Services Training & Development Institute



Jayme Rittenburg
Office Administrator



Margaret Syphax
Member Relations
Support Manager



Khadir Williams
Program Coordinator
Training & Development
Institute

ADJUNCT STAFF



Helen Walker



Evon Judkins



Kimberly Smith



Tress Parker



Myrial Pedersen



Glori Bryson



Joslyn Morman



Vanessa Woolfolk



Victoria Woolfolk



Shawna Biggs



Sabrina Williams



Tamara Williams



Elaina Mason

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Gary Mann
Chairman of the Board, AACCNJ



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder,
President & CEO



Jacqueline Baptiste
Executive Advisor to
President & CEO
& Brand Ambassador



Mary Griffin PMP, IOM
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Membership
Retention & Programs



Nicole D. Baptiste, IOM
Vice President,
Membership Acquisition
& Financial Administration



Tanya Freeman, Esq.
Chief Strategy &
Policy Officer



Vivian Harmon
Executive Director,
Training & Development Institute



Carmen Gates
Vice President of Community
Development and External
Affairs Officer



Jayme Rittenburg
Office Administrator



Adjunct
Staff



Margaret Syphax
Member Relations
Support Manager



Tammy Holloway Senior
Membership & Program
Specialist NYSBBA, AACCNJ



Nyanpu Kerkulah
Deputy Director
TDI & HEEJI



Demetra Alston
Program Director of Outreach
and Workforce Services



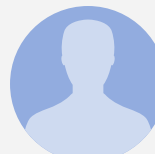
Khadir Williams
Program Coordinator



Bydeia Harmon
Community
Development Officer



Consultants



Joe Awundaga, CPA
Accounting



Shareene Snear
Grants/Financial Consultant

2 KEYNOTE SPEAKER SPECIAL GUESTS

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SPECIAL GUEST

REV. STEFFIE BARTLEY, SR.

Senior Pastor, New Hope Baptist Church
Northeastern Regional Director
National Action Network



Senior Pastor of New Hope Memorial Baptist Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey, he is a respected faith leader, community advocate, and public servant dedicated to advancing social justice and youth development. He serves as Director of the Jersey Chapters of the National Action Network and holds the role of Northeast Regional Director Board Member, overseeing initiatives from Connecticut to Washington, DC.

As Founder of the National Action Network Technical World, with locations in Newark and Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Brooklyn, New York, he has expanded opportunities for workforce development and technical training. His commitment to public safety and community relations is reflected through his service on multiple Administrative Advisory Committees addressing body camera policies, collaboration with Attorney Generals, and close work with state trooper recruitment efforts.

He has been appointed by Governor Phil Murphy to the Task Force for the Continued Transformation of Youth Justice and previously served on the Governor's Transition Team. Additionally, he contributes his leadership to the Advisory Committee Against Police Officers Using Excessive Force and serves as Chaplain for the Newark Police Department, working alongside numerous police departments and prosecutors to strengthen community partnerships.

His civic engagement extends to serving on the Board of Directors for the Chad School Foundation, the PSEG Green Efficiency Task Force Committee, and the Juvenile Justice Committee. He is also Chairman of the International Youth Organization (IYO), partners with former Governor James McGreevey on reentry initiatives, and has been involved in the development of the Mildred Crump Bridge Project. Since 2018, he has consulted on cannabis programming and serves as a Board Member for the Progressive 360 Carpenters Union. A devoted family man, he is married to Lady Harriet Bartley and is the proud father of five daughters and one son, and grandfather to four grandsons.



SPECIAL GUEST

THE HONORABLE RAS BARAKA

Mayor, City of Newark



Ras J. Baraka is the 40th Mayor of the City of Newark. A native of Newark, whose family has lived in the City for more than 80 years, Mayor Baraka's progressive approach to governing has won him accolades from grassroots organizations to the White House. With a forward-thinking agenda that reduced crime to its lowest levels in five decades, addressed affordability while maintaining steady growth, lowered unemployment, returned local control of schools after more than two decades, and replaced all 23,000 known lead service lines in less than three years at no cost to residents, Baraka has defied expectations since taking office in 2014.

Mayor Baraka's futurist agenda has included the implementation of a groundbreaking partnership called Hire. Buy. Live. Newark, a program that marks the first time that any U.S. city has sought to transform its economy by combining employment, procurement, and residential strategies.

As part of his commitment to strengthen Newark's position in the expanded technology space, the City launched LinkNWK (pronounced Link Newark). This communications network of sidewalk kiosks provides Newark residents and visitors with free, gigabit Wi-Fi, mobile device charging, phone calls to anywhere in the U.S., access to municipal services, maps and directions, and real-time local information on city streets at no cost to taxpayers or users. Additionally, broadband and Wi-Fi have been extended to city parks and recreation centers, and the City seeks to ensure that every resident has access to free or very low-cost broadband to bridge the digital divide.

Mayor Baraka is recognized nationally as a thought leader in the space of urban revitalization, and his commitment to reducing crime in Newark, reimagining public safety, tackling the city's housing crisis, and developing innovative and community-driven approaches to eliminating income inequality has solidified his status as one of the country's most progressive elected officials.

THE HONORABLE RAS BARAKA
CONTINUED... Mayor, City of Newark



While serving as the Mayor of Newark, he also presides as the President of NJ Urban Mayors Association; Executive Board Member for NJ League of Municipalities; Co-Chair, National League of Cities Reimagining Public Safety Task Force; U.S. Conference of Mayors- Vice Chair for Ports, Transportation and Communications Committee; and Member, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Local Government Advisory Committee.

Mayor Baraka was educated in the Newark Public Schools. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and History from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and a Master's Degree in Education Supervision from St. Peter's University in Jersey City. His father, the late Amiri Baraka, was a legendary poet and playwright. His mother, Amina Baraka, is herself a renowned poet. Doting husband and father, Mayor Baraka is a published author who recently released the audible memoir "The Book of Baraka" and is well-regarded in the entertainment industry for his appearance on the Grammy-award winning album, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in his authentic role as an educator, and for his EP "What We Want."



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

KENNETH L. HARRIS, PH.D.

16th President & CEO
The National Business League



Dr. Kenneth Lee Harris is a distinguished economist, international scholar, and historian of Black business. Born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, his heritage traces to the Mafa people of Cameroon, Africa (maternal lineage) and the Indigenous Aboriginal Black Choctaw-Natchez community of New Orleans (paternal lineage). His professional and scholarly work focuses globally on the advancement of Black and Indigenous business enterprises.

A proud product of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Dr. Harris earned his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Master of Arts in Counseling/Clinical Psychology from Clark Atlanta University. He later obtained an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree in Education and Public Policy from Wayne State University. He holds a dual Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in African American and African Studies and Economics from Michigan State University, including a formal specialization in Business and Entrepreneurship from the Eli Broad College of Business. He also completed postdoctoral studies at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

As the 16th National President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Business League (NBL)—the oldest and largest trade association dedicated to Black businesses and professionals in the United States, founded by Dr. Booker T. Washington in 1900—Dr. Harris leads a national membership base of more than 120,000 individuals across all fifty states and the global diaspora. The League is supported by over 125 Fortune 500 corporate partners. Under his leadership, the organization operates from its national headquarters in Tuskegee, Alabama, with regional offices in Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; Los Angeles, California; Washington, D.C.; and Cape Town, South Africa, maintaining chapters across the United States and throughout the Pan- African diaspora.

CONTINUED...

KENNETH L. HARRIS, PH.D.

16th President & CEO
The National Business League



Prior to his tenure at the National Business League, Dr. Harris founded and led several major organizations, including the Michigan Black Chamber of Commerce, which he expanded to more than 36,000 members, and the International Detroit Black Expo, Inc., an annual convening that attracted more than 1,000 Black exhibitors and over 300,000 global consumers.

Dr. Harris's career reflects an unwavering commitment to Black economic sovereignty and institutional development. As Executive Vice President of the Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council, he contributed to an economic output exceeding \$36 billion annually. His civic leadership includes his election as a Detroit Charter Commissioner in 2009, receiving 49,000 votes in a citywide election. Demonstrating decisive leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, he mobilized \$20 million in capital to sustain Black-owned businesses. By 2023, his leadership at the National Business League had facilitated more than \$150 million in corporate contracts for Black businesses with companies such as Stellantis, General Motors, Ford, Toyota, Cummins, DTE Energy, Lear Corporation, and Magna. In early 2024, he led a historic international trade mission of 42 Black women-owned businesses to Panama, Costa Rica, and

Colombia, securing more than \$40 million in business opportunities across South America and the Caribbean.

A respected advocate and thought leader, Dr. Harris advances a philosophy of economic liberation rooted in ancient African principles. Central to his framework is the restoration of MA'AT—the timeless values of Truth, Justice, Harmony, Balance, Order, Propriety, and Reciprocity—as a guiding foundation for economic development. His unique combination of rigorous scholarship, executive leadership, and cultural grounding positions him as a singular voice in the global movement to advance Black business empowerment, economic sovereignty, and institutional transformation.

1 BANKING ON THE FUTURE: PILOTING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PUBLIC & PRIVATE CAPITAL

EST. JUNE 2007



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MODERATOR

DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM

Founder, President & CEO, AACCNJ

Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr. IOM has served as the Founder, President and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), since 2007. In this role he has the responsibility of establishing, implementing and executing the mission, as well as the fiduciary oversight and governance of AACCNJ in accordance with its Bylaws. In addition, he works to identify strategic partnerships in both the public and private sector to connect AACCNJ members and supporters to resources and opportunities to grow and sustain their goals and objectives. Moreover, Harmon serves as an advocate on behalf of the 1.1 million African American residents and the over 70,000 black owned businesses statewide to ensure that policy at the municipal, county, and federal level provides fairness, equity and access to a level playing field in the market place.

Harmon is the former President and CEO of the Metropolitan Trenton African American Chamber of Commerce (MTAACC). Under his guidance, MTAACC grew its membership substantially, forged alliances with business associations/organizations and government, and forged strategic partnerships in the public and private sectors to benefit African American businesses throughout New Jersey.

John Harmon is a Board Member and the Former Chairman of the Board for the National Black Chamber of Commerce; there are 150 Affiliate Chapters of the NBCC and over fifteen international affiliates. Harmon was recently appointed to the US Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s Economic Community Advisory Council (ECAC), Investors Bank Board of Directors, Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors. Harmon is also a Board Member of Digital Place Based Advertising Association, and is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100.

He is the Founder and Chairman of the New York State Black Chamber of Commerce (NYSBCC). Additionally, Mr. Harmon is a Board member of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (NJCC), New



CONTINUED...

DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM
Founder, President & CEO, AACCNJ

Jersey BPU, Supplier Diversity Development Council (SDDC), Opportunity New Jersey, Chairman of Crime Stoppers of Greater Trenton and a former Board Member of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), First Book, Minding Our Business (MOB), a youth entrepreneurial initiative in affiliation with Rider University.

Harmon was recently acknowledged by Return on Information-New Jersey (ROI), as the Number 1 Person of Color in New Jersey. Harmon was also acknowledged in South Jersey Journal's list of the "Twenty-five Most Influential African Americans in New Jersey", for the third consecutive year. Harmon was selected for ROI-NJ "2018 Power List of Influencers. Harmon is also recognized as a Center of Influence (COI) for the United States Army and was recently selected as a participant in the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference (JCOC) hosted by the Secretary of Defense. The JCOC program is the oldest and most prestigious public liaison program in the Department of Defense. Harmon was selected as one of 40 individuals (out of 230 applicants) to attend JCOC18. In addition, Harmon was the only attendee from the State of New Jersey. Harmon was recently selected to NJBIZ2018 Power 10. The criteria for selection to the Power 100 were: Identify the people impacting business in New Jersey in a positive way whose primary mission is to foster growth in the state. Harmon was the first individual selected as a member of the host committee for NFL Super Bowl XLVII held in New Jersey 2014.

Mr. Harmon holds an associate degree in Business Administration from Mercer County Community College and Burlington County College, and holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1983. Mr. Harmon also successfully completed a one-year Fellowship on Regionalism and Sustainability sponsored by The Ford Foundation and completed the Minority Business Management Seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 2009. Additionally, Mr. Harmon completed a four-year Chamber Executive Management Program, at Villanova University, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in 2014.

Prior to his twenty three year career as a chamber executive, Mr. Harmon was previously employed at The Bowery Savings Bank in New York City where he managed the bank's Residential Real Estate Department



CONTINUED...

DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM
Founder, President & CEO, AACCNJ

overlooking major mortgage loan transactions; and at Chemical Bank where he managed third party loan originations for New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. While working at Chemical Bank, Mr. Harmon established The Affordable Housing Loan Program. Following his banking career, Mr. Harmon founded a transportation company in 1989, called Harmon Transfer, Corp. The company transported dry goods, perishable commodities, and produce throughout the Northeast United States and Canada. Mr. Harmon has three sons, John Jr., Joshua, and Justin.



PANELIST

MICHELLE BODDEN

Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer NJEDA

Michelle Bodden joined the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) in March of 2020 as the Authority's first Chief Equity & Inclusive Officer (Equity & Inclusive Culture Department). In this role, she leads efforts cultivating equity and inclusion throughout the organization, while also promoting equity throughout the State's economy through her oversight of DEI within all Authority products and programs. She brings her extensive professional experience in driving DEI strategies, standards, and policies to the State of New Jersey in this critical leadership position.

Prior to joining the NJEDA, Michelle led the supplier diversity program for Allied Universal, a leading security and facility services company with more than 200,000 employees. She also fostered economic inclusion during her tenure with the Women Presidents' Educational organization, where she executed initiatives focused on developing woman entrepreneurs and advancing the successes of women-owned enterprises. As an experienced entrepreneur herself, having founded a successful consulting firm providing business development, organizational planning, and operational streamlining expertise to multi-physician medical practices, she brings valuable firsthand entrepreneurial knowledge to the Authority, ensuring programs are accessible and developed with the unique needs of small and diverse businesses in mind.

Michelle holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Delaware State University and is a Certified Diversity Executive (CDE).



PANELIST

KAYIN BARCLAY

Senior Vice President, Advantage Capital

Kayin Barclay is a Senior Vice President at Advantage Capital, where he sources, underwrites, and manages deals for the Empower the Change Fund. He has over a decade of experience in private equity, mergers and acquisitions, capital raising, portfolio management, and financial modeling.

Before joining Advantage Capital, Kayin served as a Senior Vice President at Insight Equity, a private equity firm based in Southlake, Texas. Earlier in his career, he was an Associate at RLJ Equity Partners and an Investment Banking Analyst in the Financial Institutions Group at Barclays Capital in New York City. He began his professional journey as a Business Analyst at McKinsey & Company in Atlanta.

Kayin holds an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and graduated magna cum laude from Morehouse College with a B.A. in Economics. At Morehouse, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and named a Presidential Scholar.

Originally from Chicago, Kayin now lives in the Atlanta area with his wife. Beyond his professional pursuits, he is passionate about travel, the University of Georgia football team, and chess, having earned the title of National Master in 2008.



PANELIST

JORGE SAM CRUZ

Executive Director

New Jersey Local Initiatives Support Corp, LISC

Jorge Cruz serves as executive director of LISC-New Jersey, a decades-long community investment program that has delivered more than \$1.6 billion to New Jersey neighborhoods, businesses and community organizations to support economic opportunity and growth. He's leading the deployment of nearly \$40 million in all financial capital into those target communities in tandem with many public and private sector partners. Jorge has been recently recognized by among New Jersey's most influential Hispanic leaders by Insider NJ (Bridges of Impact 2025) and BINJE (BINJE'S Best Hispanic Business Leaders 2025: A to D - BINJE | New Jersey Business News)

Jorge has deep roots in impact investing and community development across New Jersey. Most recently, he served as vice president for community development at Citizens Bank, building alliances with community leaders to deliver financial products and services to underbanked communities and leading the bank's Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) market strategies.

During his LISC tenure, innovative efforts include helping lead the formation of the New Jersey CDFI Capital Growth Fund, developing the local platform for LISC's Entrepreneurs of Color Fund, forming the New Jersey Child Care & Early Learning Fund, and extending LISC's Financial Opportunity Center model to new communities to help people build their skills, find quality jobs and better manage their finances. Jorge has also been instrumental in expanding the geographic scope from the initial Greater Newark focus to now covering the full State of New Jersey, with the primary emphasis on the State's most financially impaired communities.

Prior to arriving at LISC, Jorge has spent nearly 30 years working as an executive and consultant to nonprofits, government and other community investment organizations supporting efforts to raise capital, develop sound grant-making practices and bridge health, economic and racial equity gaps that impact quality of life, as well as serving as chief external affairs officer for New Jersey Community Capital; chief strategy officer at the Jewish Renaissance Foundation; and executive director of Garden State Episcopal Community Development Corporation.



CONTINUED...

JORGE SAM CRUZ

Executive Director New Jersey Local
Initiatives Support Corp, LISC

In addition to his professional experience, Jorge also volunteers his time to benefit local organizations and communities. He serves as vice-chair of the Triple C Housing board, a board member for the Newark Community School for the Arts, and a member of the La Casa de Don Pedro board. For the last two years, he has served as a member of the Jegna Advisory Council, a statewide working group guiding the grantmaking strategy and priorities for the New Jersey office of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

He also serves as a steering committee member of the Doing Good Better advisory council, a state-level collaboration of the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers and the Center for Nonprofits, which are working together to form a trust-based philanthropy platform. Jorge and his wife Ivonne also recently formed the Cruz Memorial Scholarship Fund in partnership with the Boys to Leaders Foundation to benefit young men of color entering college, or currently attending college. He formerly served as an executive officer for the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits and Jewish Renaissance Foundation boards as well.

Jorge earned his undergraduate degree from the College of New Jersey. He lives in North Brunswick with his wife, Ivonne, and their 23-year old son, Sammy. He can be reached at jcruz@lisc.org.



PANELIST

SADIERA CRAWFORD

Vice President, J.P. Morgan Chase

Sadiera Crawford is a distinguished Private Banker at J.P. Morgan Private Bank, serving clients from the Summit, New Jersey office. With a specialized focus on Private Business Owners, Hedge Fund Principals, and Family Wealth, Sadiera expertly guides clients through the complexities and opportunities of wealth management. As a dedicated brand ambassador, she leverages the full breadth of J.P. Morgan's resources to help individuals and families grow, preserve, and transition their assets.

Sadiera is known for her meticulous discovery process, taking the time to understand each client's unique goals and challenges. She ensures that every client's voice is heard, and their needs are met, providing a concierge level of service as their trusted point of contact. By harnessing the broader capabilities of J.P. Morgan, Sadiera crafts tailored strategies for investing, lending, banking, and planning—always anticipating client needs and fostering genuine, long-term relationships.

Before her career in Wealth Management, Sadiera developed her leadership and strategic skills as a Manager at Footlocker, where she spent six years motivating teams and driving results through a proactive approach. Joining J.P. Morgan 10 years ago, Sadiera brings a wealth of insights that continue to inform her work today. Her core strengths include strategic analysis, problem-solving, and team leadership.

Sadiera holds an M.B.A. from Montclair State University and a B.S. in Business Administration and Management from Rutgers Business School. Her commitment to professional growth is reflected in her achievement of these degrees while working full-time, demonstrating her dedication and resilience.

As a native of Northern New Jersey, Sadiera maintains strong ties to her community and resides in South Orange with her two young children, Ethan and Elon, who are the highlight of her day. Outside of work, she enjoys staying active at the gym, discovering new restaurants, and spending quality time outdoors with her children. Sadiera is also passionate about civil liberties, human rights, and social action.

2 POSITIONING FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

EST. JUNE 2007



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PANELIST

MELANIE WALTER

**Executive Director
NJ Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency**

Melanie R. Walter brings broad-ranging experience in government and community-related matters in New Jersey state government to her role as Executive Director of the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA). Before joining NJHMFA in January 2021, Walter previously served as Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Director of the Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) and formerly served as a Deputy Attorney General in New Jersey's Division of Law.

In the role of DCA Director of the Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) and Local Finance Board Chairwoman, Ms. Walter advocated for local government interests, revitalizing the Division's supportive initiatives and developing grant programs while overseeing the financial and operational regulation of New Jersey local units to help ensure fiscal solvency. Through these functions, she championed transparency measures as well as expansive open data and local education programming and enhanced local procurement, municipal officer certification, and distressed municipality resources. More recently, Ms. Walter has developed and implemented numerous COVID-19 response and recovery measures.

Prior to joining DCA in 2018, Walter served as Deputy Attorney General in the New Jersey Division of Law's Personnel, Community Affairs, and Elections section. In that capacity, she counseled several departments, handling a broad array of complex counseling and litigation matters for the Department of Community Affairs, the Civil Service Commission, and other state agencies.

Ms. Walter, a New Jersey native, earned her Juris Doctor from the College of William and Mary School of Law, her master's in public policy from the Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy at the College of William and Mary, and her bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Mary Washington. She is a member of the New Jersey and Virginia bars.



PANELIST

PAUL F SPREWELL ESQ.

**Director, Division of Civil Rights & Affirmative Action
Commissioner, NJ Department of Transportation**

Paul F. Sprewell, Esq. is a seasoned public-sector leader with more than two decades of experience advancing civil rights, regulatory policy, organizational equity, and strategic governance across New Jersey state government. He has a diverse background in employment matters, equity, inclusion, and regulatory experience. Paul currently serves as Director, Division of Civil Rights and Affirmative Action for the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). In this role, Paul is responsible for planning, developing, directing and overseeing the execution of NJDOT's internal and external Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) Programs in accordance with State and Federal statutes. These programs/units include Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Title VI Nondiscrimination, Environmental Justice, Limited English Proficiency, Contractor Compliance, and Disadvantaged and Small Business Programs. In addition, Paul functions as the department's liaison to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and other state and federal enforcement agencies.

Prior to rejoining the department, Paul served as Director of Legal and Policy for the New Jersey Office of Information Technology. In that role, he oversaw statewide IT policy development, provided legal guidance to executive leadership, led administrative hearings, and advised on legislation and agreements shaping the State's technology infrastructure. During his first tenure at NJDOT, Paul led rulemaking, legislative analysis, and administrative actions as Manager of Administrative and Regulatory Actions, directing department-wide policymaking and serving as Acting Director of the Division of Legislative, Administrative and Regulatory Actions. He also spearheaded the development and execution of small, minority, and women owned business policies, fostering statewide collaboration and strengthening equitable access to transportation contracting opportunities.

Paul's career in public service includes additional analytical roles in transportation, law enforcement, legislative research, and administrative hearings. He began his professional journey as a Judicial Law Clerk in the Superior Court of New Jersey. A veteran of the United States Navy, Paul served honorably as a Hospital Corpsman (FMF), between 1985 and 1991. He holds a Master of Science in Information Systems from Drexel University, a Juris Doctor from Temple University's Beasley School of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Rowan University.



PANELIST

STEPHEN DILTS

Chief Operating Officer, NJ Turnpike Authority

Stephen Dilts serves as Chief Operating Officer of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. In this capacity he supports the Executive Director in carrying out all operational functions of the Authority, including overseeing the operation of the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway and the safe and efficient movement of people and commerce across the state.

Mr. Dilts has more than 25 years of local, state and federal experience in the transportation industry as an appointed and elected official and private sector consultant handling a broad and diverse range of executive oversight and management, strategic planning, program delivery, policy, intergovernmental and operational issues.

Prior to his current role, Mr. Dilts served as Senior Vice President and the New Jersey and New York Office Leader during his 11 years with HNTB, a US-based transportation infrastructure firm.

Mr. Dilts previously spent 10 years in public service, including serving as Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, Chairman and Deputy Executive Director of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, Chairman of NJ TRANSIT, Chairman of South Jersey Transportation Authority, and Mayor and Council President of Hampton Borough (Hunterdon County).

As Commissioner of NJDOT, Mr. Dilts oversaw the delivery of a \$3.5 billion capital program investing state and federal funds in critical highway, rail and local projects, the development of a comprehensive asset management program, and an innovative and nationally recognized Complete Streets Policy.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government with a master's degree in governmental administration, Steve holds a Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, in political science from Boston University.



CONTINUED...

STEPHEN DILTS

Chief Operating Officer, NJ Turnpike Authority

Mr. Dilts serves as Vice President of goHunterdon, a non-profit Transportation Management Association in Hunterdon County, NJ, dedicated to promoting safe, sustainable transportation and mobility.

Previously he served three terms as President of the Intelligent Transportation Society of New Jersey, as an executive committee member of the American Council of Engineering Companies of New Jersey and on the New Jersey Committee of the Regional Plan Association. He is a member of the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS). He has been married to his high school sweetheart, Biz, for more than 30 years.

3 EMBRACING CHANGE & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

EST. JUNE 2007



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MODERATOR

NADINE JONES

**Founder & Principal
General Counsel Support Services**

Nadine Jones is a seasoned legal executive and dynamic storyteller known for bridging law, leadership, and public discourse. A former General Counsel and SVP at global logistics giant Kuehne + Nagel, Nadine now serves as the founder of General Counsel Support Services, offering strategic legal and compliance guidance to companies navigating regulatory and cultural transformation.

A recognized media voice on issues of corporate accountability, DEI, and community- police relations, Nadine has appeared on NPR, NBC, Fox 5, WJLA and 11Alive News. In 2023, she received the prestigious Exemplar Award from the National Legal Aid & Defender Association for her work uniting corporate and community interests. Her accessible insights and human-centered leadership make her a trusted speaker for legal, business, and public audiences alike.

Nadine is also a published writer (Reuters Practical Law Journal, RadarOnline, Pasedena Black Pages, Jurist.org), former Adjunct Professor at Fordham Law, and co-founder of The Initiative: Advancing the Blue & Black Partnership, a nonprofit focused on rebuilding trust between law enforcement and communities of color.

She is a sought-after voice for her rare ability to make complex legal issues both relatable and actionable—always grounded in purpose, equity, and a deep understanding of the people behind the policies.



PANELIST

TONY LOWMAN

Chancellor, Rowan University

Anthony “Tony” Lowman, Ph.D., is the first chancellor of Rowan University, where he leads one of the nation’s top 10 fastest-growing public research institutions. A biomedical engineer and entrepreneur, he has expanded Rowan’s academic offerings, launched New Jersey’s only veterinary school and helped position the university for Carnegie R1 status. Previously provost and engineering dean, Lowman is also co-founder of ReGelTec, a medical device company. He is a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors and the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineers.



PANELIST

REBECCA DARLING

**Director Community Affairs & Partnerships
Coreweave**

Rebecca Darling is a globally recognized external affairs expert with over 20 years of experience driving innovative social performance initiatives for multinational organizations. Known for fostering trust-based relationships, Rebecca delivers strategies that integrate sustainable development, risk mitigation, and business transformation.

Rebecca brings her extensive external affairs expertise to her current role as Director of Community Affairs and Partnerships at CoreWeave, where she is building and leading strategies that ensure meaningful community engagement, responsible site selection, and lasting partnerships that support social license to operate. Having built her career navigating the complex community dynamics of the extractive industries, Rebecca now applies that same rigor to the technology sector, where rapid infrastructure growth presents similar challenges around community trust, impact, and partnership.

Prior to CoreWeave, Rebecca served as Group Head of Social Performance at Newmont Corporation, where she shaped enterprise-wide social performance strategies, including human rights, Indigenous affairs, artisanal and small-scale mining and land access. Through her leadership, Rebecca championed efforts that aligned corporate goals with social risk and impact management. Her professional experience and leadership include prior roles at Barrick, Rio Tinto, the International Finance Corp, and The Asia Foundation.

As an educator and Visiting Scholar at Cornell University for nearly a decade, Rebecca designed and taught a graduate-level course on stakeholder engagement strategies, equipping future leaders with tools to advance sustainable development. Personally, Rebecca is deeply committed to fostering community resilience and empowerment through hands-on leadership and volunteerism. Over the years, she has led initiatives in diverse global settings, from coordinating youth education programs in refugee camps to supporting entrepreneur development in underserved communities.

Rebecca holds a Master of Public Administration from Cornell University and a Bachelor of Arts in Government from California State University, Sacramento.



PANELIST

DERRICH PHILLIPS

President & Founder, Aspire Cyber

Derrich Phillips's mission is to make cybersecurity compliance accessible, practical, and affordable for organizations of all sizes. He is dedicated to transforming complex regulatory frameworks and enterprise-level risk assessments into actionable strategies that businesses can execute with confidence.

His two decades in cybersecurity, spanning roles as a Cyber Network Defender in the U.S. Army and leadership positions at Lockheed Martin, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise, and Bank of America, have forged his unique approach. While performing third-party risk assessments for a major financial institution, he recognized the profound struggles businesses face when navigating complex compliance mandates, igniting his commitment to serve as their advocate.

As the Founder and President of Aspire Cyber, Derrich ensures clients receive step-by-step guidance to master Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) requirements. By streamlining the compliance process, he minimizes the administrative burden and maximizes actual data security, helping organizations satisfy their enterprise and federal customer requirements.

He also established the CMMC Professionals Network (CPN), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to delivering hands-on compliance training, and he hosts the CMMC Proof Podcast. Both initiatives provide actionable insights that make securing sensitive data and passing rigorous assessments more efficient and cost-effective.

His ultimate goal is to give organizations the clarity to achieve cybersecurity compliance swiftly, allowing them to focus on business growth rather than being paralyzed by regulatory red tape.

16TH ANNUAL
**BUSINESS
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6

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President & CEO
New Jersey Chamber of Commerce



Mark E. Manigan
President & CEO
RWJBarnabas Health



Tony Wittock
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Cyber Security Consulting Ops

Join us for an opportunity to honor companies that support the mission of the AACCNJ, and our efforts to improve the economic climate, for businesses in New Jersey.



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8TH ANNUAL
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A PURPOSE**

111 TH NEW JERSEY LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

NOVEMBER 17, 2026

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

HARD ROCK HOTEL AND CASINO

BRIGHTON BALLROOM

Hard Rock
HOTEL & CASINO

Join the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City, NJ, for our FREE event held during the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Conference!



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SATURDAY LUNCHEON, PANEL DISCUSSION, & BOOK SIGNING

All attendees receive a signed copy of: *Notes on a Backlash: When a Black Woman Goes Viral*
\$29.99 value



October 17, 2026
11:30 am - 1:30 p.m.

Apa Hotel - Woodbridge, NJ
120 Wood Avenue South
Iselin, NJ 08830

[Click Here to Register](#)



SPEAKER: APRIL RYAN

Host of the Tea for The Contrarian on Substack

MSNOW Contributor

*Longest serving Black White House
Correspondent in history*

White House, Capitol Hill reporter

Author of Black Women Will Save the World

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Dr. Velma Trayham

Pres. & CEO, ThinkZILLA Consulting Group
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Founder & Pres.
Kim Jenkins Enterprise



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African American
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NEW JERSEY

17TH ANNUAL CIRCLE OF ACHIEVEMENT
- BLACK HISTORY MONTH -
AWARDS GALA

FEBRUARY 18, 2027
6 PM - 11 PM
VENETIAN
GARFIELD, NJ

SAVE THE DATE

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The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey has been incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code and provides advocacy and support for businesses throughout the State of New Jersey.

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