



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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+1 (202) 289-5920

info@nusacc.org

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U.S. - ARAB CHAMBER PARTICIPATES IN ANNUAL MEETING OF NATION'S GOVERNORS

NUSACC's Eighth Visit to the National Governors Association Promotes Growth in Morocco – U.S. Commercial Relations

Nashville, TN – The National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC), in cooperation with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, participated recently in the annual summer meeting of the National Governors Association (NGA). This is the eighth year in a row that NUSACC has worked to build ties between the Arab world and the U.S. Governors, who are a driving force for U.S. exports and two-way investment.

This year's gathering of U.S. Governors took place in Nashville, Tennessee – well known as "Music City" but, at the same time, an increasingly important destination for global businesses. The meeting featured a number of high-level speakers, including private sector leaders and the Honorable Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States.

"For much of the past decade, our Chamber has been privileged to connect Arab ambassadors to the nation's Governors," noted David Hamod, President & CEO of the U.S. - Arab Chamber. "This continues to be a win / win opportunity for the United States and the 22 countries of the Arab world, which are taking an increased interest in technology transfer, knowledge transfer, and direct investments throughout the USA."



Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin offers opening remarks at the NGA annual summer meeting, held this year in Nashville.

Photo credit: National Governors Association



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam (right), whose state hosted the NGA meeting, welcomes Moroccan Ambassador Rachad Bouhlal.

This year's visit placed a special emphasis on the Kingdom of Morocco, which was represented by H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Morocco's Ambassador to the United States. "This is the second time that I have attended the annual meeting of the NGA," noted Ambassador Bouhlal, "and I thoroughly enjoyed making new friends and reaffirming existing friendships. Nowhere else in the United States can one meet with dozens of U.S. Governors in a single location like this, providing a unique opportunity to discuss business, but also to build personal relationships."

Building Bridges

This is the eighth year in which the National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce has led a delegation of Arab ambassadors to the NGA annual meeting. Previous destinations included Traverse City (Michigan), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Biloxi (Mississippi), Boston (Massachusetts), Salt Lake City (Utah), Colonial Williamsburg (Virginia), and Milwaukee (Wisconsin).

The [National Governors Association](#), founded in 1908, is the collective bipartisan voice of the nation's Governors and one of Washington DC's most respected public policy organizations.



Moroccan Ambassador Rachad Bouhlal (right) with Delaware Governor Jack Markell and his wife, Carla.



In Nashville, during the 106th summer meeting of the NGA, Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, and Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam welcomed a bipartisan group of the nation's Governors. Governor Fallin outlined priorities that Governors have identified through NGA, including supporting job creation and economic growth, protecting the National Guard, urging Congress to take swift action to pass the "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act," and addressing the nation's water infrastructure needs.

Community leaders around the United States are increasingly recognizing that exports and foreign direct investment (FDI) are important economic drivers. A recent NGA white paper entitled [*State Strategies for Global Trade and Investment*](#) noted, "Strong connections to the global economy are increasingly important to the economic success of states and the companies within their borders." Between 2009 and 2013, the NGA paper said, U.S. exports "accounted for almost one-third of U.S. economic growth, in part because of growth in international markets and in part because domestic economic growth has been slow compared with previous recoveries. Foreign direct investment over the past decade has supported more than 5 million good-paying jobs."

Highlighting Nashville, "Music City"

The host state highlighted the musical heritage of Nashville, home of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. These facilities house over two million Country Music artifacts, including possessions of such American icons as Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, and a wide range of contemporary Country stars.



Nashville showed off its new Music City Center to meeting attendees.

Photo credit: Music City Center

Nashville is also famous for the Ryman Auditorium, home of the Grand Ole Opry and recognized by Pollstar as "Theatre of the Year" for four years running (2010 – 2013). The Ryman has attracted entertainers to its stage for more than a century, including such diverse greats as Louis Armstrong, James Brown, Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan, BB King, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Minnie Pearl, and Bruce Springsteen.



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Iowa Governor Terry Branstad (center) with Moroccan Ambassador Rachad Bouhlal (left) and NUSACC President & CEO David Hamod.

According to the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, “No city of similar size offers as great a setting and potential for international trade and investment.” Nearly 1,000 businesses have relocated to or expanded in Nashville in the past decade, including such well known international entities as Nissan North America (Japan), Embraer (Brazil), Electrolux (Sweden), Valeo (France), Bridgestone Americas (Japan), and Wilson Sporting Goods (Finland). Foreign Direct Investment supports nearly \$6 billion of labor income in the Nashville area annually, according to the Nashville Chamber, and one in six residents of Nashville is foreign-born.

A variety of business sectors have been attracted to Nashville, including but not limited to advanced manufacturing, automotive and aeronautics services, health care, supply chain management, construction & engineering, and entertainment. These sectors are supported by Middle Tennessee’s 18 colleges and universities, enrolling well over 100,000 students.

According to Ralph Schulz, President & CEO of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, “The international character of Nashville has been steadily growing over the last 50 years. Increasingly, Nashville is a center for international trade, particularly in health care, music, automotive, and infrastructure development.”



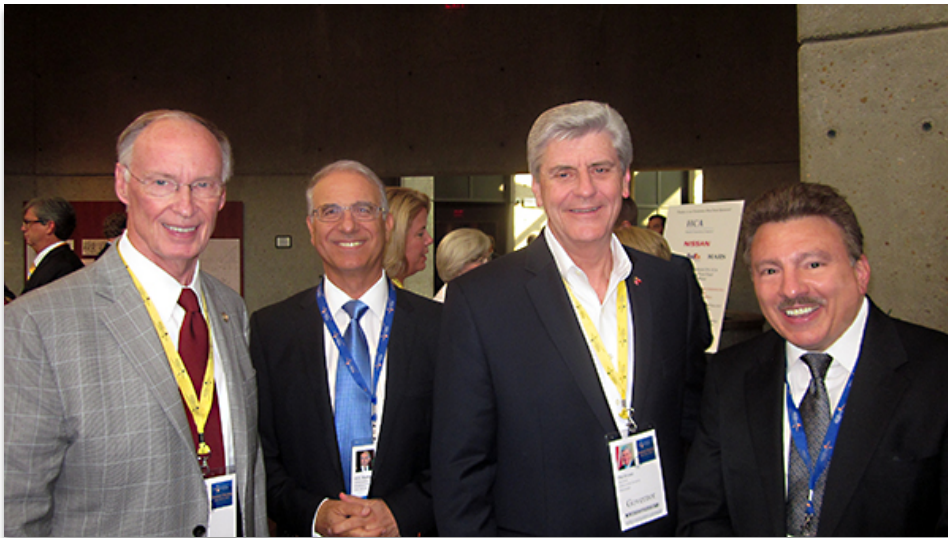
Over coffee, Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy and Ambassador Bouhlal discuss international business opportunities.



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In 2013, Tennessee was the 14th largest exporting state in the United States, with over \$32.3 billion in exports. \$1.49 billion of Tennessee's total exports went to the Arab world last year, led by exports to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. In recent years, Nashville's top exports have included transportation equipment, primary metal manufacturing, chemicals, machinery, and miscellaneous manufactured commodities.



Southern hospitality (from left to right): Alabama Governor Robert Bentley; Moroccan Ambassador Rachad Bouhlal; Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant; and NUSACC President & CEO David Hamod.

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, widely regarded as the voice of American business in the Arab world, is in touch with business communities across the United States and serves as the U.S. point of contact for the national chambers of commerce in the 22 Arab nations. On a daily basis, NUSACC works closely with leaders throughout the Arab world, as well as high-level decision makers in the U.S. business community, public policy research centers, multilateral institutions, nongovernmental organizations, media, and the U.S. Government.

WASHINGTON D.C. (HEADQUARTERS) • HOUSTON • LOS ANGELES • NEW YORK • SALT LAKE CITY
1023 15TH STREET N.W. • SUITE 400 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005
TEL: (202) 289-5920 • FAX: (202) 289-5938 • WWW.NUSACC.ORG