
NEWSLETTER



POLICY PULSE
JANUARY 2026



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As we move into 2026, the Live Events Coalition remains focused on one clear goal: ensuring the live events industry has a strong, informed, and respected voice in public policy.

This year will bring consequential decisions in Washington that directly affect how our industry plans, travels, hires, trains, and operates. LEC is engaged early and consistently to advocate for the businesses and workers who power live events.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Live Events Coalition is guided by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of industry leaders who donate their time, expertise, and leadership to advance public policy on behalf of live events.

Our current Board includes:



Wendy Porter

President & Chair of the Board,
Vice Chair, Government Affairs



Dwayne Thomas

Chair, Government Affairs



Russ Callahan

Treasurer



Al Mercuro

Chair, Marketing and Media



In Case You Missed It

On December 5, 2025, **Wendy Porter** was named **President and Chairwoman of the Board of Directors** for the Live Events Coalition.

Wendy brings decades of leadership across corporate events, live experiences, and industry advocacy, and has served the LEC in various roles since the coalition's inception in March 2020.

Under her leadership, LEC will continue expanding its presence on Capitol Hill, strengthening industry alignment, and ensuring policymakers understand the real-world economic and workforce impact of live events.

A Special Thank You



Nancy Shaffer

President & Chair Emerita

We extend our sincere thanks to **Nancy Shaffer** for her extraordinary leadership as President of the Live Events Coalition from March 2020 through December 2025.

Nancy led the Coalition through the most challenging period in the history of the live events industry. Her leadership helped ensure live events had a voice during the pandemic and laid the foundation for the advocacy organization LEC is today. We are deeply grateful for her service and continued involvement as a member of the Board of Directors.

WHO WE ARE, AND WHY THIS WORK MATTERS



The Live Events Coalition was formed in March 2020, when the live events industry collapsed overnight at the onset of the COVID pandemic.

At that time, even in a fully shut-down state, the U.S. live events industry represented:

- More than 12 million workers
- 1.1 million small businesses
- Approximately \$1 trillion in economic impact

Despite that scale, the industry had little visibility or representation in Washington.

What began as a grassroots emergency response has evolved into a national advocacy organization with three core priorities:

- Federal advocacy to protect small businesses and the event workforce
- Reliable data and research to support policy conversations
- Long-term industry recognition at the federal level

CURRENT INITIATIVES

& Capitol Hill Work

Under the leadership of Government Affairs Chair Dwayne Thomas and the Board, LEC has re-established a credible and consistent presence in Washington through targeted fly-ins, direct congressional meetings, and formal federal submissions.

Our current priorities include:

1. NAICS Code Modernization

Event businesses remain misclassified across more than 30 NAICS codes, limiting visibility, access to funding, and eligibility for federal programs.

In partnership with **Laura Palker** and the **Events Education Workforce Development Federation (EE-WDF)**, LEC has taken the following steps:

- Submitted a request to expand Supercode 72 to include Events
- Provided supporting research and industry data
- Engaged SBA contacts for follow-up
- Entered the multi-year process tied to the 2027 NAICS revision cycle

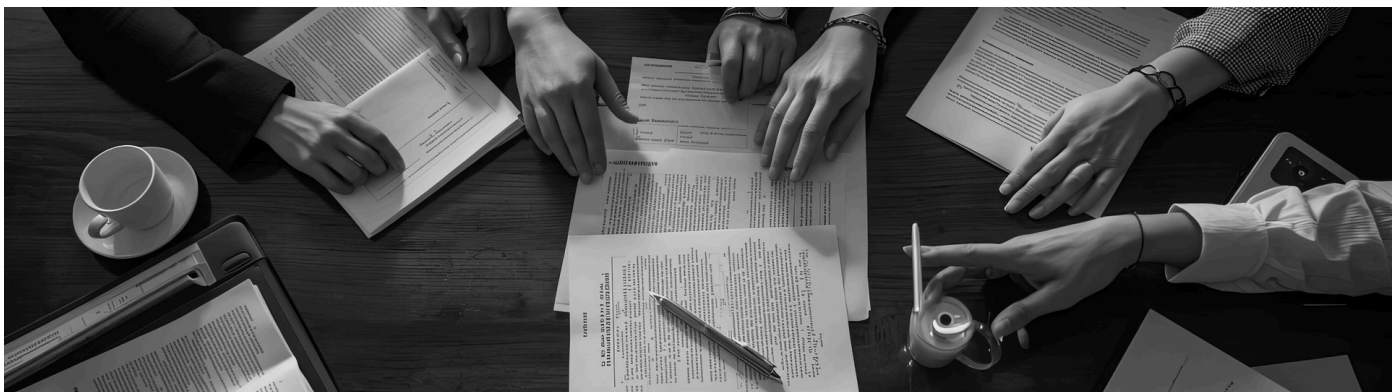
New as of October 2025:

LEC has formed a formal partnership with the advocacy arm of the **Small Business Administration** to support industry research and NAICS reform. This is a meaningful step toward long-term federal recognition.

2. Tariff Relief for Event Businesses

Tariffs on equipment, materials, and imported goods disproportionately impact event producers, rental houses, and suppliers, driving up costs and limiting competitiveness.

LEC is pushing for tariff relief to reduce costs and protect small event businesses.



3. Health Care Affordability & ACA Premium Assistance

A significant portion of the live events workforce relies on the ACA marketplace for health coverage. Recent efforts to expand or extend premium assistance did not pass in Congress, resulting in substantial cost increases for small business owners and independent contractors across our industry.

The Live Events Coalition will continue to advocate for affordable health care access by elevating the real stories of event professionals impacted by rising premiums, reduced coverage options, and increased financial strain. These firsthand accounts are critical to helping policymakers understand how rising health care costs directly affect workforce stability, business viability, and long-term industry sustainability.

January 7 Update:

The U.S. House voted **221–205** to advance legislation extending ACA premium subsidies, helping prevent significant health insurance cost increases for millions of Americans. The bill now awaits scheduling in the Senate.

Please monitor LEC social channels for an upcoming **Action Alert** with details on when and how to contact your Senators to urge a **YES** vote.

4. Market Fairness & Exclusive Venue Contracts

Exclusive in-house AV arrangements continue to restrict planner choice, inflate costs, and limit access for small production companies.

While these practices do not currently meet the threshold for an antitrust case, LEC continues to address this issue through its AV White Paper, focused on structural business models rather than individual providers.



Alignment with Small Business Majority

LEC collaborates with **Small Business Majority**, whose policy priorities closely align with those of event professionals and small business owners, including:

- Health coverage affordability
- Capital access protections
- Workforce development incentives
- Tax simplification and reduced administrative burden

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY



Through its partnership with the **Events Education & Workforce Development Federation (EE-WDF)**, the Live Events Coalition now serves as the Federation's official advocacy arm.

Next-Generation Workforce Pipeline

- Structured training and entry pathways into live events
- Advocacy for grant programs that help small businesses hire and develop new talent
- Clear role definitions and skill standards across planning, production, and creative disciplines

Exploring New Healthcare Options

EE-WDF is actively evaluating potential healthcare solutions for freelancers and small business owners in the live events industry. Updates will be shared as options develop.

GET INVOLVED

LEC is Powered by Volunteers

You can get involved by:

- Signing up for advocacy updates and action alerts
- Volunteering your skills in advocacy, communications, research, or workforce initiatives
- Sharing your story to support data collection and policy conversations

Industry participation is essential to effective advocacy.

👉 Visit www.TheLiveEventsCoalition.org to get involved



Support the Live Events Coalition

LEC is a 100% volunteer-led non-profit advocacy organization. No board member or volunteer receives compensation.

Donations support essential operations, including:

- Website hosting and maintenance
- Business filings, renewals, and compliance
- Accounting and tax preparation
- Washington, DC fly-ins and policy meetings
- Industry conference participation
- Subscriptions for outbound email, surveys, and communications tools

👉 Please visit our [website](http://www.TheLiveEventsCoalition.org) to make a donation and support this work.

Looking Ahead

Live events are an economic engine, a workforce ecosystem, and a critical connector for business and communities. With continued engagement from industry professionals, partners, and supporters, the Live Events Coalition will keep advocating for policies that recognize, protect, and strengthen this industry.

Thank you for being part of the Coalition.

