

NAMC SOLIDIFIES NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN FEDERAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT 56TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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WENDELL R. STEMLEY, CMAA
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINORITY CONTRACTORS

Washington, D.C. – As federal programs supporting minority-owned businesses face intensifying legal challenges, the **National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC)** is emerging as a vital force in defending and advancing diversity and inclusion across America's construction industry. At its 56th Annual National Conference, held June 17-19, 2025 in Cleveland, Ohio, in partnership with the **NAMC Northern Ohio Chapter**, NAMC reasserted its role as a national thought leader and policy advocate for inclusive economic growth, workforce development, and inclusionary contracting practices. Congratulations to Ariane Kirkpatrick, President of the Northern Ohio Chapter, for hosting such a powerful and purpose-filled event.

This year's conference theme, **Unity: One NAMC - Building Equity and Protecting Our Future**, underscored a bold stance amid growing political and legal threats to affirmative contracting. Over three days, NAMC convened industry leaders, elected officials, agency representatives, and contractors for high-level panels, business development workshops, and strategic networking. From the Women in Construction Luncheon to the Legacy Contractors Roundtable, NAMC demonstrated its unmatched capacity to bridge legal action, history, policy, practice, and advocacy.

TIME Magazine named Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward, to the 2025 TIME100 annual list of the most influential people in the world. Ms. Perryman attended the NAMC National Conference to recognize NAMC President Wendell R. Stemley for his leadership on the front lines in advocating for minority business participation in government and private contracting programs, working in collaboration with Democracy Forward Senior Counsel Brooke Menschel. As you may be aware, NAMC and its coalition partners are enjoined in the lawsuit **Mid-America Milling Co. v. U.S. Department of Transportation**. The coalition is represented by **Democracy Forward**, the **Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund (MBELDEF)**, and **Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs LLP**.



(Left to Right) **Brooke Menschel**, Democracy Forward, Senior Counsel; **Wendell Stemley**, NAMC President; and **Skye Perryman**, CEO, Democracy Forward



Aaron D. Ford, State of Nevada Attorney General

The Democracy Forward Team and Skye Perryman work tirelessly to safeguard our enduring, yet fragile, democracy. When Donald Trump's federal-funding freeze sparked fear and confusion across the country, Ms. Perryman mobilized a rapid-response legal team and filed the nation's first lawsuit challenging the freeze, winning the crucial administrative stay (and later injunction) that halted it nationwide.

Nevada Attorney General Aaron D. Ford, this year's keynote speaker, reaffirmed his commitment to protecting corporate diversity initiatives and combating efforts to roll back progress. He collaborated with NAMC in standing against a letter issued by 13 conservative state attorneys general that sought to intimidate Fortune 100 companies away from implementing lawful diversity and inclusion programs. In response, Attorney General Ford led a coalition of over 20 attorneys general in issuing a formal rebuttal, defending DEI efforts as both legal and essential to economic opportunity and diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

A central highlight of this year's conference programming was NAMC's spotlight on MBELDEF –the Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund–the only national legal initiative solely dedicated to protecting the rights of minority contractors. With minority business programs increasingly targeted in court, MBELDEF plays a critical role in preserving access, ensuring fair representation, and providing rapid-response legal support.

MBELDEF is building a national Story Bank to document real-life discrimination in contracting, providing essential evidence for courts and Congress. MBELDEF is also actively raising funds to deploy legal teams where needed most. At the conference, attendees were encouraged to Tell your story. Support the fight. Show up. With this initiative, NAMC is leading the charge in turning legal resistance into legal resilience.

To learn more and to support MBELDEF, visit <https://mbeldefwatchdog.org>

"Minority-owned businesses are under attack, but NAMC is not backing down," said Wendell R. Stemley, NAMC National President. "Through MBELDEF, we are asserting our rights in courtrooms, boardrooms, and legislative halls. Our future cannot be decided without our voice."

A Platform for National Progress

The 2025 conference elevated the voices of trailblazing professionals and policymakers. Speakers tackled systemic barriers and offered bold strategies for inclusive procurement, mentorship, and capacity building. The Northern Ohio Chapter of NAMC was instrumental in creating opportunities for local businesses throughout the planning and execution of the conference—ensuring that the event not only highlighted national issues but also delivered tangible impact at the community level.



NAMC Northern Ohio Chapter
(Left) **Hilton Smith**, Executive Director
(Middle) **Ariane Kirkpatrick**, President



This year, we proudly recognized a distinguished group of honorees whose leadership, dedication, and contributions have made a lasting impact in their industries and communities. Each individual represents the spirit of innovation and resilience that drives progress. Their achievements remind us that when vision meets action, real change is possible.

NAMC National President's Award Winners:

- 2025 NAMC Parren J. Mitchell Advocacy Award: **The Honorable Aaron D. Ford, Attorney General, State of Nevada**
- 2025 NAMC Parren J. Mitchell Advocacy Award: **Skye Perryman, Brooke Menschel, Democracy Forward**
- 2025 NAMC Major Construction Joint Venture Team of the Year Award: **Gilbane Building Company and Ozanne Construction**
- 2025 Cornerstone Award - Outstanding Joint Venture Partnership: **The Whiting-Turner Construction Company and the AKA Team**
- 2025 NAMC Major Construction Design Build Team of the Year Award: **NBBJ Architect - Turner, Walsh & Smoot**
- 2025 NAMC Sheila Jackson Lee Award for Advocacy: **Ariane Kirkpatrick, The AKA Team**
- 2025 Lifetime Achievement Service Award: **Arthur Landers, Landers & Associates**
- 2025 NAMC Lifetime Achievement Award: **Leroy Ozanne, Founder, Ozanne Construction Company**
- 2025 NAMC Lifetime Achievement Award: **Lewis R. Smoot, Sr., Founder, The Smoot Corporation**

To view the conference program book, visit

<https://www.flipbookpdf.net/web/site/41e6cc973ac90f12256474848b41ea7ca7b453ccFBP23258661.pdf.html>

A Movement, Not Just a Membership

From shaping federal policy to mentoring the next generation of diverse contractors, NAMC is not simply participating in the national conversation—it is leading it.

Founded in Oakland, California, in 1969 by Ray Dones and Joseph Debro, NAMC is the oldest minority construction trade association in the United States. Members include more than 50 Hall of Fame recipients and Legacy Contractor Builders, with a combined annual project capacity of over a billion dollars nationally. Through a network of local chapters and in collaboration with strategic and corporate partnerships, NAMC assists members with building capacity by providing access to opportunity, advocacy, and contractor development training. NAMC is also proud to represent the interests of millions of skilled minority workers across the country.

As the federal landscape continues to evolve, NAMC remains resolute.

Your Business. Your Rights. Your Fight.

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