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**EASTERN STATES EXPOSITION PRESIDENT, GENE CASSIDY, ACCOMPANIES
LEADERS IN ENTERTAINMENT TO WASHINGTON D.C. IN SUPPORT OF THE CARE ACT**

In 2017, the Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA) and the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) first banded together to push the H.R. 1787, or Carnivals Are Real Entertainment (CARE) Act, before the House of Representatives, as well as its companion legislation in the Senate, S. 4040, the Restoring Industry Development in Entertainment (RIDE) Act. Congress has been slow to respond, so leaders in entertainment, including Eastern States Exposition (ESE), have arrived at Congress's doorstep to demand change.

These Acts advocate for a unique and threatened industry facing a labor shortage issue by correcting laws that exclude mobile entertainment employers from utilizing the P non-immigrant visa classification to secure the temporary, seasonal staff they need to succeed.

Between 2016 and 2023, the number of carnival companies operating in the United States dropped by 50%. This drastic decline is in large part due to a historic and acute worker shortage. Many outdoor amusement businesses use the H-2B visa program; there are 388,000 H2-B certified jobs. However, in 2022, only 66,000 H2-B visas were granted.

“The OABA is spearheading the passage of H.R. 1787 and S. 4040 to create a P4 visa category for our industry,” explained Greg Chiecko, OABA President and CEO. “This category will allow carnival workers and food concessionaires to have a consistent workforce to service the thousands of fairs and events our members participate in every year. Working with our partners at the IAFE, each day we get closer to achieving our goal.”

On October 24, 2024, leaders in the industry appealed to policymakers in Washington D.C. The two largest U.S. carnivals, North American Midway Entertainment (NAME) and Ray Cammack Shows, Inc. (RCSFUN), were present, as well as representatives from three major U.S. fairs–

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Wisconsin State Fair, Iowa State Fair and The Big E. Eastern States Exposition President and CEO, Gene Cassidy, attended on behalf of The Big E of West Springfield, Mass.

The presentation began in the War Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and traveled to the White House Press Room. Carnival and fair representatives articulated the fraught state of the industry and the dire need for congressional intercession.

Cassidy shared that, after numerous trips to Washington D.C. to advance the CARE Act and RIDE Act, this was “the first time that important policy writers were directly communicated to, and [he] was surprised by their deep interest in the matter. The shared hope of the industry is that this is a step in the right direction to secure jobs and American business.”

State fairs, such as The Big E, exist to benefit agrarian America. Without the reliable carnival labor force that often hails from beyond U.S. borders, these organizations cannot deliver the same caliber of entertainment that they have for years. Their missions are jeopardized by the lack of labor, and they will crumble without immediate change. Eastern States Exposition is proud to be a figurehead for this change by petitioning in our nation’s capital.

- 30 -

The Big E is America’s only multi-state fair celebrating the rich history, culture and traditions of the six New England states. As the principal event of Eastern States Exposition, The Big E has presented the finest livestock; agriculture; innovative commercial, industrial, and artistic developments; and the highest caliber of varied entertainment to the people of the northeastern United States for more than a century. The 17-day event has grown to become the largest fair in the Northeast.

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Above: ESE President and CEO, Gene Cassidy, answers questions during a presentation at The White House in Washington D.C.

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