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Eastern States Exposition Receives Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG)

Eastern States Exposition (ESE) President and CEO, Eugene J. Cassidy, was joined by Congressman Richard E. Neal and Robert Nelson, director of the Small Business Association's (SBA) Massachusetts District Office, to announce on Monday that ESE is the recipient of a Shuttered Venues Operators Grant (SVOG).

SVOG federal grants are given to venues in the entertainment realm such as concert halls, theatres and attractions that suffered significant losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Big E, North America's fifth largest fair in 2019, did not take place in 2020.

"For more than 100 years, the Eastern States Exposition, Home of The Big E, has welcomed millions of visitors to enjoy exhibits, entertainment, and agriculture," said Congressman Neal, Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means. "Due to the pandemic, The Big E was forced to close its gates for the 2020 season resulting in extensive loss. I advocated fiercely on their behalf to the Small Business Administration for swift approval of The Big E's Shuttered Venue Operators Grant application. Today, just weeks after almost 1.5 million people visited the 2021 fair, we celebrate the authorization of \$9 million to The Big E. Congratulations to Gene Cassidy and his team for this tremendous award."

"We are grateful to Congressman Neal for his extraordinary efforts and for his support and advocacy through this arduous process. This grant breathes life into the Fair as it recovers from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Cassidy.

The Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) program was established by the Economic Aid to Hard-Hit Small Businesses, Nonprofits, and Venues Act, and amended by the American Rescue Plan Act. The program includes over \$16 billion in grants to shuttered venues, administered by SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance. The maximum amount available for a single grant award is \$10 million. The money can be used on payroll, rent, utilities and a host of other costs associated with businesses' reopening.

Nelson is responsible for the effective delivery of SBA's financial and business development programs with a mission to counsel, assist and protect the interest of small business statewide in order to maintain and strengthen the economy.

The economic impact of Eastern States Exposition is more than \$681 million. It accounts for 7,506 full-time jobs resulting in \$319 million in personal income; generates 3,500 temporary jobs during The Big E alone; and 1,992 people choose to live in the region because of the Exposition's presence and the attractive employment opportunities.

The growth in income, personal consumption and industry sales spurred on by ESE contributes in a significant way to Massachusetts tax revenues – \$7.2 million in income tax revenue and \$9.6 million in sales tax revenue.

In addition to The Big E, The Exposition hosts more than 120 shows and events annually at its 175-acre facility in West Springfield, Mass. For more information, visit www.TheBigE.com.

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