

CSRA 2026 ANNUAL MEETING - CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Monday, November 16, 2026

Time	Session
2:00 – 5:00 PM	National Chain Partners’ GA Meeting
2:00 – 3:45 PM	CSRA Board Meeting (All CEOs Invited)
4:00 – 5:45 PM	CSRA Board & National Restaurant Association Senior Staff Meeting (All CEOs
6:30 PM	CEO/National C-Suite Dinner - Barcelona Restaurant
6:30 PM	Government Affairs Staff Dinner — On Your Own
	Suggested Meet-Up: Puttshack — wear your name tags to break the ice and get to know others!

Tuesday, November 17, 2026

Time	Session
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 – 9:20 AM	Welcome to Nashville Scott Dolch, President & CEO, Connecticut Restaurant & Hospitality Association, and current chair of CSRA; Michelle Korsmo, President & CEO, National Restaurant Association
9:20 – 9:40 AM	Welcome <i>Sara Beth Urban, CEO & President, Tennessee Hospitality & Tourism Association</i>
9:40 – 10:40 AM	State of the Union Two weeks after the midterm elections, Sean Kennedy will discuss where things stand, what will shape policy in 2027, and how it will affect restaurant advocacy with trusted industry friend Dave Thomas. <i>Sean Kennedy, EVP, Public Affairs, National Restaurant Association, and Dave Thomas, Partner at Mehlman Consulting</i>
10:40 – 11:00 AM	Break – SRAs Runs on Dunkin
11:00 AM – Noon	Credit Cards & Restaurants: An Imbalanced Relationship The credit card interchange fight continues. Visa & MasterCard continue to report record profits. Federal agencies have seemingly blocked state legislative paths, so where do we go from here? <i>Moderator: Joe Kefauver, Managing Partner, Align Public Strategies Panelists: Daniel Swanson, Attorney and Consultant; and Kelsey Erickson Streufert, Chief Public Affairs Officer, Texas Restaurant Association</i>
Noon – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00 PM	MAHA, EPR & Other Problematic Acronyms Brands’ perspective on the continuous challenges from both sides of the aisle on environmental and nutritional issues. Hear from the brands on their advocacy strategy and the broader supply chain effects these policies have on restaurant operations.
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Emerging Issues in Technology Policy & Surveillance Pricing Panel discussion

2:30 – 3:00 PM	<i>Moderator: Aaron Frazier, Vice President of Public Policy, National Restaurant Association</i> So-called Fair Share Proposals Join us for a session on this rapidly emerging healthcare topic where we will discuss current political, communications, and legal strategies. <i>Moderator: Mike Whatley, Vice President, State Affairs and Grassroots Advocacy, National Restaurant Association. Panelists: Robin Repass, Executive Director and Chief Legal Counsel, Restaurant Law Center; Andrea Reay, Government Affairs Director, Washington Hospitality Association</i>
3:00 – 3:20 PM	Break
3:20 – 4:00 PM	Was That Video Real? AI is reshaping advocacy and campaigns—but how can you put it to work effectively? David Massey leads a discussion with legislative and campaign experts on practical ways emerging AI tools can strengthen advocacy, communications, and engagement. <i>Moderator: David Massey, Coordinator, State Affairs, National Restaurant Association. Panelists: Jeff Flint, President, HexaCom Group; Benjamin Fineran, Head of AI, State Affairs</i>
4:00 – 4:50 PM	Government Affairs Only Breakout Session
5:00 – 6:15 PM	Welcome Reception (Rooftop)
Evening	Dinner on Your Own

Wednesday, November 18, 2026

Time	Session
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 – 10:00 AM	What the Polls Are Saying A conversation on polling trends and how that affects legislative advocacy. How the electoral results impact perceived power and where caucus leadership goes from here. Presented by Chris Lane from Cygnal, one of the top polling firms in the country. <i>Chris Lane, Senior Partner & Pollster at Cygnal</i>
10:00 AM -12:00 PM	Foundation Breakout Session: Program Innovation, Partnerships & Successes Program Innovation, Partnerships & Successes A conversation about innovative program models, unique partnerships, and industry-backed certificates that are creating new opportunities and strengthening our foundations. <i>Alycia Harshfield, President, California Restaurant Foundation; Hanna Naum-Stoian, Vice President of Talent Solutions, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce; Evann Vrana-Gerber, Director of Education & Workforce Partnerships, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce</i>
10:00 – 10:45 AM	Hemp-Derived THC Beverage Policy Where do we go from here at the federal, state, and training levels? A quickly emerging discussion regarding THC/Cannabis. <i>Moderator: Mike Whatley, Vice President, State Affairs and Grassroots Advocacy, NRA, and Allison DeRoberts with the Ohio Restaurant & Hospitality Alliance</i>
10:45 – 11:05 AM	Break

11:05 AM – Noon	CEO Only Breakout Session
11:05 AM – Noon	Government Affairs Only Breakout Session
Noon – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 – 1:20 PM	Welcome to All <i>Bob Luz, Executive Director, CSRA; Scott Dolch, President & CEO, Connecticut Restaurant & Hospitality Association, and current chair of CSRA</i>
1:20 – 2:00 PM	National Restaurant Association Update <i>Michelle Korsmo, CEO, National Restaurant Association</i>
2:00 – 2:45 PM	Keynote Speaker The Stories Behind the Songs: A Conversation with Country Music Legend Dean Dillon Featuring Country Music Hall of Fame Inductee Dean Dillon in conversation with Clay Bradley, Vice President of Creative, BMI Nashville. <i>Country Music Hall of Fame Inductee Dean Dillon</i>
2:45 – 3:10 PM	Break
3:10 – 3:50 PM	Collaborating for Greater Impact Hear how SRA leaders are leveraging their foundations to strengthen membership, amplify advocacy, elevate their brand, and create greater impact through cross-functional collaboration. <i>Moderator: Alycia Harshfield, President, California Restaurant Foundation; Panelists: Meghan (Meg) Gardner, Vice President, Delaware Restaurant Association and Delaware Restaurant Foundation; Amanda Smith, Executive Vice President of Workforce Development for the Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association (MRLA), Executive Director of the Michigan Hospitality Foundation, and Executive Director of the Hospitality Training Institute of Michigan (HTIM); Stephanie Otterson, Director of Communications, Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association (PRLA)</i>
3:50 – 4:40 PM	Practical Project Management Panel discussion by association professionals who will share real-world perspectives on moving projects from concept to completion while navigating priorities, limited resources, cross-team collaboration, and the inevitable challenges that arise along the way. <i>Moderator: Yvette Tavares, Vice President of Sales & Operations, Connecticut Panelists: Stephanie Otterson, Director of Communications, Pennsylvania; Elizabeth Barry, Membership & Events Manager, Connecticut; Emily Daunt, VP Communications & Strategy, Michigan</i>
5:30 PM	Bus Pick Up from Lobby
6:00 PM	A Taste of Nashville: Dinner at Martin's Bar- B-Que Joint — Offsite Dinner for All Attendees Experience a true taste of Music City! Join fellow attendees and guests for an evening offsite at Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint, featuring legendary whole-hog BBQ, a laid-back Nashville atmosphere, and great food, drinks, and conversation. Enjoy live entertainment by The Dylan Altman Blues Band, courtesy of BMI, as we bring a little Nashville music to the evening. Location: Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint

Thursday, November 19, 2026

Time	Session
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8:00 – 8:45 AM	Breakfast
8:45 – 9:15 AM	Educational Foundation Strategic Plan Update <i>Michelle Korsmo, CEO, National Restaurant Association</i>
9:15 – 9:45 AM	Foundation Executive Director Introduction & Discussion <i>Dr. Monica Parrish Trent, Ph.D., Executive Director, National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF)</i>
9:45 – 10:15 AM	State of the Restaurant Industry <i>Chad Moutray, NRA</i>
10:15 – 11:00 AM	From Busy Work to Better Work A working session on using AI to run association operations, with a focus on real examples of how you can automate the time-consuming work that nobody wants to do through back-office automation. The latest year-end updates are provided as you discover practical ideas that can help your association work smarter. Bring your laptops for this interactive session led by Chris Gloede, Chief Consultant with Ricochet. <i>Chris Gloede, Chief Consultant with Ricochet.</i>
11:00 – 11:10 AM	Break
11:10 – 12:00 PM	Lightning Rounds — Fast Ideas, Real Results Why try to create from scratch when you can steal shamelessly from your colleagues? Many of the best ideas are already in our community of peers who have faced a challenge, found a solution, and achieved measurable results. Six SRA leaders will present one proven success story each and provide you with actionable paths for success in your SRA. These will be ideas worth the theft charge! <i>Moderator: Douglas O'Flaherty, COO, South Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association Panelists: Andy Piccolantonio, Chief Growth Officer, Ohio Restaurant & Hospitality Alliance; Meghan Gardner, VP, Delaware Restaurant Association; Victoria Maggiacomo, Manager of Membership/Marketing, Rhode Island Hospitality Association; Corey Mobley, Lead Executive Director, Texas Restaurant Association; Laura Shunk, COO & Foundation President, Colorado Restaurant Association</i>
Noon – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 – 1:55 PM	Are We Ready for Who's Next? Leading The People Who Will Reinvent Our Industry The next generation of leaders is already emerging—but are our associations ready for them? This conversation looks beyond generational labels to explore changing expectations, new ways of learning and communicating, and rapidly evolving technology. Brian Connors of Accelerating Leaders will challenge us to consider what we need to stop, start, and rethink today to remain relevant tomorrow—and how we can attract, motivate, and retain the people who will reinvent our industry. <i>Brian Connors, M.S., CHE, CSW, Director of Innovation & Strategy at Accelerating Leaders</i>
1:55 – 2:40 PM	From Noise to Value: Communicating What Restaurant Operators Actually Need to Hear SRA's are working harder than ever and stretched thin across our teams responsible for communications, advocacy, education, events, and member expectations. At the same time, engagement can plateau, renewals are less predictable, and recruiting new members is increasingly difficult. Cheri Quinn and Emily Youngblood from The Mercury Creative Group will lead a session on providing practical strategies to simplify messaging, tell stronger stories, and create communications that strengthen engagement, participation, and member growth. <i>Cheri Quinn, Director of Brand Strategy, Mercury Creative Group; and Emily Youngblood, Client Services Director, Mercury Creative Group</i>
2:40 – 3:00 PM	Break

3:00 – 3:45 PM	What SRA Member Benefits Drive Recruitment & Retention An interactive panel discussion of SRA leaders who will share proven member benefit programs and best practices that have successfully driven recruitment, increased retention, and strengthened member engagement. Discover new partnerships and programs to enhance your association's value proposition and make membership an indispensable investment for restaurant operators. <i>Moderator: Ben Feliccia, SVP, Strategy & Engagement, Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association</i> <i>Panelists: Carol Dover, CEO, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association; Kerry Miller, VP, Operations, Massachusetts Restaurant Association + one more</i>
3:45 – 4:45 PM	Learning Labs – NRA Solutions Through the Lens of State Success Stories In this interactive session, attendees will choose two of four 20-minute learning labs, each featuring an NRA expert teamed with an SRA leader who has effectively implemented the program at the state level. Through practical examples and peer insights, participants will learn how these solutions are positioned, promoted, and driving engagement, workforce development, and operational success. <i>Liz Wannemacher, Senior Director of Marketing, Product & Growth, National Restaurant Association</i>
Evening	Dinner on Your Own

Friday, November 20, 2026

Time	Session
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 – 9:45 AM	Foundation: Tapping Into New Funding What are founders funding and where are the opportunities? Attendees will share ideas, lessons learned, and new approaches to generating revenue. <i>Alycia Harshfield, President, California Restaurant Foundation</i>
9:45 – 10:30 AM	Foundation: Defining Our Value Proposition – Differentiating Our Programs. As more culinary and workforce programs enter the space, how do we stand out? Share ideas for differentiating our programs, communicating their unique value, and perhaps partnering with other programs. <i>Alycia Harshfield, President, California Restaurant Foundation</i>
10:30 – 11:15 AM	Foundation: Building Boards That Show Up A discussion on board recruitment, engagement, and leadership development, with a focus on building boards that actively support your mission, relationships, and foundation growth. <i>Alycia Harshfield, President, California Restaurant Foundation</i>
9:00 – 9:45 AM	Membership/MarCom: Turning Great Ideas into Action – The best ideas often come from those sitting next to you. Brian Connors will return with a session to guide us through a collaborative problem-solving process designed specifically for SRA Membership and Marketing & Communications professionals. Working with our peers, he will help us discover common challenges, exchange proven strategies, and leave with practical ideas and an action plan to put into practice immediately. <i>Brian Connors, M.S., CHE, CSW, Director of Innovation & Strategy at Accelerating Leaders</i>
9:45 – 10:30 AM	Membership/MarCom: Peer Exchange Roundtable: Real Conversations. Real Solutions.

	We will break into four facilitated roundtable discussions of some of our biggest challenges to spur honest dialogue, idea sharing, and problem-solving. We will leave with practical insights that are working. <i>Roundtable Facilitators: Chris Tapia, Director of Communications & Outreach, Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association; Megan Bol, Director of Member Engagement, Massachusetts Restaurant Association; Devany McNeil, EVP, Strategic Partnerships, Colorado Restaurant</i>
10:30 – 11:15 AM	Membership/MarCom: Looking Ahead, Team Wrap-ups & Conference Takeaways Each work group will meet alone to review the week and share notes on what they are bringing back to their states, and conversations that will continue through work group calls throughout the coming months.
11:15 – 11:30 AM	Closing Remarks & Adjourn