



President's 2015 Biannual Report





American Chamber of Commerce & Industry – Panama

Message from Bobby:

As President of the American Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Panama, I am proud to present the results of the first six months of what an extraordinary year, 2015, has turned out to be in regards to the planned activities that we have accomplished. AmCham has a long-standing tradition of supporting and promoting businesses of all sizes and so far this year, we have been able to accomplish that and deliver much more.

Our Chamber is well known for being the voice of business and an advocate of good governance that benefits our business community. Our relationships with the Panamanian Government Officials continue to solidify and results have been that we continue to be seen as a respected organization within our community. We strive to bring together community leaders to create solutions for issues affecting our day to day businesses. As well as providing support within Panama with valuable information for new companies becoming members of AmCham that are looking to start up and in turn create new jobs for Panamanians. The Chamber continues to offer many opportunities for members to connect with one another including our popular Networking Events. Our successful Trade Mission to Tampa proved that we are ready to seek business opportunities outside of Panama and continue to promote the Free Trade Agreement between Panama and the United States. This and the many other forums and seminars that we have done have been a positive reflection of what we promised we would do. I encourage each of you to find out more about our ongoing programs and participate as the many benefits obtained are valuable for you and your businesses. Our AmCham staff is always eager in assisting us to attain these results as well as making strides by growing our membership base and keeping it strong.

On behalf of all the folks that work diligently besides me in our Board of Directors, Executive Committee and also our Chairpersons of our committees as well as the entire staff of the AmCham offices I would like to thank them as well as our members for the continued support in making these first six months such a total success.

I definitely am looking forward to the remainder of this year and for working closely next to the Board Members, Executive Committee team as well as the folks from our AmCham staff completing all of our planned activities that we have in line for 2015.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert St. John".

Robert St. John
President
American Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Panama

I. Fostering Bilateral Trade

OUTBOUND TRADE MISSIONS



AmCham and Delta Air Lines visited Atlanta to plan the upcoming Atlanta Trade Mission. A delegation from AmCham traveled to Atlanta for 3 days accompanied by Jeannette Diaz Granados, Sales Manager for Delta Air lines to meet with several organizations in preparation for the upcoming Atlanta Trade Mission in August 26-29. During this brief trip, the AmCham Delegation met with Bettina Gardner, from the Office of the Mayor; Ricardo Hubler of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; Santiago Marquez of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce ; Sonia Tucker, Chief of Protocol Affairs of CNN.

AmCham 1st outbound trade mission to Tampa Bay, Florida. The purpose of this Trade Mission was to present business opportunities between Tampa Bay, whose port is the largest of Florida and the Panamanian business sector. The mission took place from May 6 to 9 this year.



On this occasion, AMCHAM joined key government representatives such as Panama's Minister of Tourism, the Director of Investment Promotion of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, the Administrator of the Panama Pacific Agency, and about 30 Panamanian businessmen in logistics industries, tourism and Research and Development (R&D). During the visit two Memorandums of Understanding were signed to strengthen commercial relationships:

The Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce and AmCham, Panama
 Port Tampa Bay and COEMPROZONAS (Asociación de Zonas Francas de Panamá)

AACCLA'S MEETINGS

AACCLA's 2015 Mid-Year Meeting and "Business Future of the Americas" in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. Delegates to AACCLA Mid-Year Conference and "Business Future of the Americas" were Juan Carlos Arias, AACCLA Vice President; Tom Kenna, AACCLA Vice Chair; Robert St. John, AmCham President; and Maurice Belanger, AmCham Executive Director. This year, the Mid-Year Meeting and BFA were held in Haiti, from June 15-17th. The event was attended by 300 delegates from the AmChams in the region, and among the theme was "The Diaspora Investments in Latin America and the Caribbean."



AACCLA's "Outlook on the Americas Conference" and Strategic Planning Retreat in Los Angeles from February 11-13. President Bobby St. John, AACCLA Vice Chair, Tom Kenna and CEO Maurice Belanger attended, where the representatives of the 24 AmChams from Latin America and the Caribbean met to listen to re-knowned speaker on such subjects as the "Software of Trade Integration"; "Global Business Rule of Law Dashboard;" and "US – Cuba Relations."

LOCAL EVENTS

Forum "Como Afecta su negocio la nueva Ley Anti-Blanqueo de Capitales. This forum was addressed to companies from the financial sector, profesional services, Real Estate among others. The main speakers where Gian Castillero from Arias Fabrega y Fabrega, Michelle Moreno from Multibank and Bismark Rodriguez from E&Y.



Forum “Retos y Realidades contra el Comercio Ilícito”. The objective of this forum was to bring together government authorities and the private sector to work together against illicit commerce. Patrick Killbride, Director of the Global Intellectual Property Center of the US Chamber of Commerce and Fermin Cuza, President of BASC, were the keynote speakers during this forum. Tommy Hilfiger, Crocs, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson were some of the companies that shared their experiences in the different panels.



Visit from the US Trade & Development Agency and Export-Import Bank. The purpose of the visit was to explain the functions of the US Trade & Development Agency and its relationship with the Export-Import Bank and how they participate in financing exports of US products in our market

Thomas Donohue, President and CEO US Chamber of Commerce visited Panama and offered a speech to AmCham Panama “Partners in Progress: Expanding Economic Opportunity Across the Americas”



Conference “Visión Tocumen en los Próximos Diez Años” by Joseph Fidanque III, CEO Aeropuerto Internacional de Tocumen. More than 150 AmCham members participated at this event.



II. Sustainability

The AmCham Delegates to the AACCLA meeting presented a donation to “Healing Hands for Haiti”, as a gesture of solidarity with this organization. “Healing Hands for Haiti” is a secular, non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to delivering quality, sustainable physical medicine and rehabilitation education, training and care for adults and children with physical disabilities in Haiti.



During the first half of this year AmCham received students from several US Institutions interested in learning about the Panamanian economy and AmCham Panama.

- Undergraduate business students from the University of Arkansas, Saint Louis University and Florida Atlantic University
- Graduate students in real estate from New York University



- MBA students from Bryant University in Rhode Island, Saint Leo University of Florida and Chapman University in California

Recycling Week Press Conference. AmCham had the honor to host the Press Conference for the presentation of the 1st Recycling Week in Panama, which consisted in a series of activities that took place during May 11th to the 17th.



Leadership Development Program of San Miguelito School Principals. On February, the Steering Committee of The Leadership Development Program of San Miguelito School Principals met in AmCham to develop the plan for 2015.

III. Membership Value

Berlitz and AmCham signed a Memorandum of Understanding which offers all AmCham members a special registration fee to study at Berlitz English Center.



COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS

A total of 50 committee meetings have been held throughout the first half of the year with a total of 800 participants. Assistance to our Committee Meetings has increased dramatically thanks to the restructuring of 14 committees in 2014 to 9 committees in 2015 and the leadership of our Chairs and Vice Chairs.



Mid-Year Committee Chairs Report 2015. Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Committees shared with each other and with members of the Board of Directors, a summary of the different activities and achievements that the committees have made up to date, as well as the plans for the rest of the year. The timing was perfect for the exchange of ideas, while sharing a good time.

June Member's Recognition & Networking Cocktail held at the Radisson Decapolis Hotel, Luxor Banquet Room.



AmCham XV Golf Tournament “El Golfista & el Amigo”- Held at el Tucán Country Club & Resort with a participation of 70 players



Newcomer’s Breakfast - 35 new members joined AmCham in the first half of 2015

March Member’s Recognition & Networking Cocktail held in the Hotel Courtyard by Marriott



The Fourth Annual AmCham Corporate Run - 464 participants at Amador, 116 teams of four participants each competed in the 5 Kilometer race, representing 25 AmCham member companies.