

## NACo International Economic Development Task Force: 2019 Fall Conference Call Agenda + Notes

Monday, November 18, 2019: 3:00PM – 4:00PM EST

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### Task Force Leadership

- Chair:** The Hon. Kathryn Starkey, Commissioner, Pasco County, Fla.  
**Vice Chair:** The Hon. Mary Lou Berger, Commissioner, Palm Beach County, Fla.  
**Vice Chair:** The Hon. Diane Burgis, Supervisor, Contra Costa County, Calif.  
**Vice Chair:** The Hon. Martha Schrader, Commissioner, Clackamas County, Ore.  
**Vice Chair:** The Hon. Matthew Veitch, Supervisor, Saratoga County, N.Y.  
**Vice Chair:** The Hon. Stephanie Wright, Councilmember, Snohomish County, Wash.

### Meeting Agenda + Notes

- Call to Order and Welcome – **The Hon. Kathryn Starkey**, Commissioner, Pasco County, Fla.
  
- Connecting with Your Consulates: How Counties Can Leverage Relationships with Consulate Offices to Encourage International Economic Development
  - Consulate offices across the nation provide easy points of access for county leaders to meet with representatives of foreign countries. Fostering a good relationship with consulate generals or honorary consulates can help counties connect local businesses to international markets, as well as attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Learn how counties can develop these relationships, and how consulates can help county leaders encourage international economic development.*
  
  - **Ms. Norma Brenne Henning, J.D.**, Honorary Consul of Germany for Western Florida
    - **Email:** [NHenning@Henning-law.com](mailto:NHenning@Henning-law.com)
    - **Phone:** 239.821.6504
  
  - **Ms. Deborah Wilkinson**, Founder, Wilkinson Global Connections, LLC; Executive Director, Tampa Bay Trade and Protocol Council
    - **Email:** [deborah@wilkinsonglobalconnections.com](mailto:deborah@wilkinsonglobalconnections.com)
    - **Phone:** 954.205.9130

#### **Notes on Presentation from Ms. Deborah Wilkinson:**

- Honorary consuls solve the problem that some cities and rural areas do not have a consul general and are often far away from the nearest consulate. The number of consuls/honorary consuls a country has in the US usually depends on its financial resources.

- Consulates and relationships with them can help you grow your targeted industries. Important to help grow trade and investment.
- Many counties have great transportation facilities (such as ports and airports) but are experiencing difficulties leveraging them. This is why counties should utilize consuls/honorary consuls to identify opportunities for international collaboration.
- Honorary consuls all come from different background. Counties will most likely be able to get help in any specific area.
- Other countries are looking at regions as a whole, more so than specific counties.
- Some good practices/resources for counties to engage internationally:
  - County workshops. Counties may consider creating and distributing briefing books that contain all the protocols.
  - Mini missions. Setting up missions to get their county and region on the radar. Counties can participate in missions led by the governor.
  - Leveraging educational facilities such as schools and universities.
  - Sister cities. Counties work closely with sister cities. It's not uncommon for counties, cities and states to have these. E.g., Tampa, FL currently has over 10 sister cities.
  - Work closely with binational chambers of commerce
  - U.S. Global Leadership Conference. Two-day conference that brings together congressional members and leadership at all levels nationwide.
- Having knowledge of protocol is *very* important because every country is different culturally. For example, Broward County has a comprehensive protocol that covers topics ranging from gift-giving to colors to avoid using.

***Notes on Presentation from Ms. Norma Brenne Henning:***

- Honorary consuls are volunteers representing their countries up until their retirement age (e.g., 65 for Germany). They're grassroots diplomats to implement the ambassador's mission.
- Honorary consuls are not professional diplomats. They all come from different background with different interests, such as business, law, and social work. Therefore, county officials are expected to know their consuls and their interests in order to build a relationship with consuls.
  - The role of an honorary consul depends on what their strengths and interests are.
- Honorary Consuls are vetted by both the country and by the U.S. State Department.
- Counties have a lot of resources that can be attractive to consuls, including connections to different county departments such as the sheriff's office and the emergency department.
- There might also be cultural and societal topics that can interest your consul in building relationships (e.g., country ancestry in the U.S., school exchange programs, etc.)
- Rural counties are particularly attractive to manufacturing companies.
- Consuls sometimes find it hard to get in touch with governors and county commissioners because international relations are not always deemed important. It is crucial that county leaders get the issue on the radar and actively reach out. Give your consul a call if you encounter any questions!
- Binational conferences and forums can be a great opportunity for counties to present themselves to foreign companies that want to do business locally (e.g., by sponsoring an event as a county).
- Language can sometimes be a big challenge. A lot of the languages of the consuls' home countries are not widely taught in the U.S.

- A great example of county-consul collaboration: German Skills Initiative in Tampa Bay, FL. An apprenticeship program that helps German firms (especially manufacturing) recruit local workers. It now also partners with the school system in Pasco County.
- People do prepare before going into a different culture, even if the culture is relatively similar to that of the U.S.
- Personal relationships through honorary consuls can help you develop relationships with businesses.
  - Smaller businesses will often need hand holding, so can better fit in to a smaller county that can offer a closer relationship and better services.
- The German American Chamber of Commerce, e.g., has site selection and matchmaking services – call them and get on their radar.
- Make it known that your county is open to investment, and work on academic exchanges with local universities.

### ***Notes from Q & A:***

- Consuls also want to know county officials and what they can bring to their home countries.
- Do not let the protocols stop you from contacting another country – people often make mistakes, and other countries understand. They'll receive a protocol book on the U.S. before coming here, too.

### ***Closing and Announcements***

- Coming up, our next meeting will be held at NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., between February 29th and March 4th.
- At this meeting, the Task Force will discuss how counties can partner with the federal government, states, cities, and other counties to position their home economies to compete internationally. This session will be open to all conference attendees.
- Further details will be sent out as they are determined, so **keep an eye on your inboxes!**
- Registration for NACo's 2020 Legislative Conference is now open! Visit [www.NACo.org/Leg](http://www.NACo.org/Leg).

## NACo International Economic Development Task Force: 2019 Fall Conference Call Speaker Bios



**Ms. Norma Brenne Henning, J.D.** has served as Honorary Consul for the Federal Republic of Germany in Western Florida since 2003, a position in which she gets to combine her interest in transatlantic relations and diplomacy with service to the substantial population of German nationals in Florida. She has been practicing law in Florida since 1996, concentrating on business and family immigration and foreign direct investment. After years with large law firms, she formed the Henning Law Firm, P.A. in 2006 where she concentrates on advising small and medium sized companies entering the US market.

Since Jan. 2017, Ms. Henning has worked with the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR-Florida) as a civil rights and immigration attorney to bridge cultural divides, create better understanding and protect the rights of marginalized communities. In 2018, she formed Corporate Executive & Back Office Services, LLC with other German professionals to assist small and medium-sized companies with 'soft landing' services needed to have a successful start in the State of Florida.

A native of Germany, Norma Henning started her professional life in Public Affairs for the U.S. Army in Germany and came to the United States as an Army wife in 1986. She earned the Distinguished Journalism Graduate designation from the Hall School of Journalism at Troy State University in Alabama in 1993 and a Juris Doctor from the University of Florida College of Law in 1996.

**Ms. Deborah Wilkinson** is the Executive Director of the Tampa Bay Trade and Protocol Council. The Council works closely with the Consular Corps and business community in promoting and developing the Tampa area as an international hub. The Council is comprised of the Mayor of Tampa and Hillsborough County. Ms. Wilkinson coordinates with other international organizations to leverage the strength of Tampa in cultivating education, business and culture, including the Universities, Port and Airport.

Ms. Wilkinson also is the Founder of Wilkinson Global Connections, LLC that represents the Tampa Bay Trade and Protocol Council and implements branding and strategizing with several counties, cities and states. She works closely with the U.S. State Department, U.S. and Local Department of Commerce, U.S. Economic Development Agency, FEMA and private entities on policy with Lion's Eye Institute and Shumaker, Loop and Kendrick.



Prior to joining the Council, Ms. Wilkinson served as the Chief Development Officer for Broward County's Office of Economic and Small Business Development, and as Deputy Trade Representative for the State of Washington. She has also served on numerous International Trade Advisory Boards, represents the State of Florida on Protocol with Duval, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties and she serves as a State advisor for the U.S. Global Leadership Council.