2026 AAPA Commissioner's Symposium

The New Orleans Marriott
September 28, 2026
10:00AM – 12:30PM

Agenda is subject to change. Last updated 9/23/26, 3:16 PM EDT
Entry to the Commissioner's Symposium is included with your AAPA Annual Convention ticket!

Sponsored by

PLAQUEMINES PORT
HARBOR & TERMINAL DISTRICT

Welcome Remarks
10:00AM—10:05AM (5 min.)

Welcome to the AAPA Commissioner's Symposium!

Speaker
-The Hon. Sang Yi, President & CEO, AAPA

AAPA Government Relations Update
10:05AM—10:30AM (25 min.)

The AAPA Government Relations team kicks things off with an update on advocacy, hot topic issues, and additional pressing needs that the association is supporting on behalf of its member ports.

Speakers
-John Bressler, VP, Government Relations, AAPA
-Ian Gansler, Director, Government Relations, AAPA
-Holden Haley, Manager, Government Relations, AAPA

***KEYNOTE:* Economic Security is National Security: Shifting Policies in Global Trade and Maritime Infrastructure**
10:30AM—10:55AM (25 min.)

From strategic competition with foreign adversaries to hidden vulnerabilities in global logistics, the intersection of trade and homeland security has never been more complex. Aris Kourkoumelis, Assistant Secretary for Trade and Economic Security at DHS, will outline the administration's current framework for protecting critical infrastructure and ensuring economic resilience. This high-level brief will address how new federal trade policies, foreign investment scrutiny, and rigorous interagency enforcement directly impact port operations and international shipping corridors.

Speaker
-Aris Kourkoumelis, Assistant Secretary for Trade and Economic Security, DHS

Today's Maritime Hiring Market: Finding the Right Candidate
10:55AM—11:25AM (30 min.)

As the ports and maritime industry continue to adapt to an ever-evolving labor market, it's important to understand the key metrics, job requirements, and attributes that will ensure your port's next executive hire is the right person for the job.

Speaker
-Sue Dvonch, Managing Partner, Shey-Harding Executive Search

Session Sponsor:
sheyharding executive search

COFFEE BREAK
11:25AM—11:35AM (10 min.)

Meet the CEO—In Conversation with Sang Yi
11:35AM—11:55AM (20 min.)

Since joining AAPA in Spring 2026, Sang Yi has embarked on an ambitious growth plan to cement the association's relevance and impact on Capitol Hill, while also working tirelessly to create more value for members. Hear direct from Sang as he discusses his vision for AAPA in the coming months and years.

Speakers
-MODERATED BY: Lloyd "Ronnie" Newsom, Port Commissioner & Chairman, Plaquemines Port Terminal & Harbor District
-The Hon. Sang Yi, President & CEO, AAPA

Navigating PIDP Grants: A Commissioner's Guide to Federal Infrastructure Funding
11:55AM—12:25PM (30 min.)

The Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) is the federal government's premier dedicated grant source for modernizing docks, cargo handling, and intermodal connectivity. Designed specifically for port commissioners and governing boards, this high-level briefing demystifies what PIDP funds, how the competitive evaluation process works, and what makes a local application successful. Attendees will gain clear insight into board-level governance responsibilities, including local matching fund commitments, multi-year project readiness, and regional economic justification. Commissioners will leave with the foundational questions your board must ask port leadership to position your authority for transformational federal investment.

Speakers
-*MODERATED BY*: Aimee Heim, Director, Government & Civic Relations, Port of San Diego
-Peter Simons, Director of the Office of Port Infrastructure Development, MARAD