

Dear Members,

Shortly into our journey to celebrating 50 years of NSBE's annual conventions, we were faced with the responsibility of deciding how to convene in a way that is authentically us, and that honors the basis of our organization's existence and mission.

After careful deliberation, **our National Executive Board voted to move #NSBE50 out of Florida and relocate to Atlanta, GA** where we will be able to provide the *full NSBE convention experience*. The context of what this decision entailed is detailed below.

Unified Voice for Social Impact & Change + Sustaining NSBE's Legacy

Our Society originated during the Black Power Movement, a time when racial pride and truthful expression of the Black experience were amplified and at the forefront. Since then, NSBE members, advisors and staff alike have carried the torch with a goal *"to increase the number of culturally responsible black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community."*

With such a longstanding history, we had to take into account that the political climate in Florida seeks to undermine what we stand for and would prohibit us from existing and congregating the NSBE way.

The Pivot

These occurrences¹ were catalysts to the #NSBE50 location pivot, and were compounded by logistical challenges, which altogether created a circumstance that would inevitably hinder us from providing an expansive, complete, and authentic NSBE convention experience. Indeed, because of the referenced occurrences and other actions – on May 20, the NAACP issued a formal travel advisory for Florida, which states, in part, "Florida is openly hostile toward African Americans, people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. Before traveling to Florida, please understand that the state of Florida devalues and marginalizes the contributions of, and the challenges faced by African Americans and other communities of color." Other civil rights organizations, among them the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Equality Florida and the Florida Immigrant Coalition, have expressed support for the NAACP's action and/or have issued travel advisories of their own. Florida is at the forefront of efforts across the nation to ban diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and therefore it is important that these unified voices be heard loudly there.

As a Black organization working towards equity for Black STEM students and professionals, we stand in solidarity with efforts and advisories from Black legacy organizations like the NAACP, especially on matters that directly affect NSBE and our mission – such as the aforementioned.

Refocusing on Celebrating NSBE50

As we begin to shift our focus back to the joys and meaningful impact of #NSBE50, we will have a centralized focus to (1) maintain a unified voice for social impact and change; (2) support Region III and all members of the NSBE family – right where they are as well as on a national and international level; and (3) remain true to NSBE's legacy and mission.

We are also actively working to help our members who are directly impacted by attacks on DEI. For those of you who need assistance, we encourage you to apply for NSBE's Chapter Relief program which is in place to address and mitigate issues like these.

Please know that this decision was not made lightly – we approached it with thoughtfulness, care and all things considered – but ultimately with you, our stakeholders, and the integrity of NSBE in mind. We will share more details about relocating as they become available.

Sincerely,

Avery Layne, NSBE National Chairperson

Janeen Uzzell, NSBE CEO

- ¹ In December 2021, Florida's governor proposed the so-called Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (W.O.K.E.) Act to give "businesses, employees, children and families tools to fight back against woke indoctrination." Legislation based on the proposal was passed by the Florida State legislature as the "Individual Freedom Act," signed by the governor in April 2022 and became effective the following July. The law prohibits schools and businesses from teaching critical race theory or other subjects that could make anyone feel "guilt, anguish or any form of psychological distress" because of their race, gender or nationality.
- Florida's Parental Rights in Education Act also took effect concurrently with the WOKE Act. Nicknamed "Don't Say Gay," the legislation prohibits sexuality and gender topics in grades K–3.
- Also in 2022, Florida passed three state laws ostensibly designed to protect children from inappropriate subjects but which have resulted in schools' banning of titles such as Toni Morrison's "Beloved," Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb," biographies of Hank Aaron and Roberto Clemente and a large percentage of the state's math textbooks, which were accused of containing "woke" ideology.
- In January of this year, Florida's governor called for the elimination of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs at the state's higher education institutions.
- In March of this year, Florida rejected the College Board's new AP African American studies class, citing the provisions of the Stop WOKE law.
- In May of this year, Florida's governor signed a bill into law that prohibits the state's colleges and universities from expending funds on DEI programs or critical race theory (CRT). The presidents of 28 Florida colleges subsequently pledged to end "discriminatory DEI and CRT initiatives" at their institutions.
- In July of this year, Florida's Constitutional Carry law will go into effect, eliminating the requirement that an individual obtain a permit to carry a concealed weapon in the state.