



## ***National Lieutenant Governors Association***

### **2025 NLGA Winter Meeting**

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

December 5-7, 2026

### **Keynote & Session Speaker Biographies**

#### **U.S. Army Lieutenant General Jeth B. Rey, Deputy Chief of Staff**



Lieutenant General Jeth B. Rey assumed duties as the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-6 on January 1, 2025. In this capacity, he is the principal military advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Chief Information Officer for planning, strategy, network architecture, and implementation of Command, Control, Computers, Communications (C4) and Cyber Operations and Networks for worldwide Army operations.

Lieutenant General Rey is a native of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Since his career began in September 1983, he has successfully served as an enlisted Soldier, Warrant Officer, and Officer including assignments in Special Operations units at Fort Bragg, Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning, and White House Communications Agency at Camp David Presidential Retreat.

He is a graduate of Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, Primary Leadership Development Course, Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course, Warrant Officer Candidate School, Officer Candidate School, Signal Officer Basic Course, Signal Captains Career Course, Naval Command and Staff College, and the Army War College. He has master's degrees in Telecommunications Management from Webster University, National Security Studies from the U.S. Naval War College, and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.

His previous assignments include Director of Network C4 Services and Integration, Army G-6 (2024); Director of the Network Cross-Functional Team at Army Futures Command (2021-2024); Director of C4Systems, J6, United States Central Command (2019-2021); Army Cyber Command G3 (2018-2019); Executive Officer to the Army Chief Information Officer/G-6 (2017-2018); Commander of the 516th Signal Brigade, Fort Shafter, HI (2015-2017); Commander of the 112th Signal Battalion (Special Operations) (Airborne), 528th Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne), Fort Bragg, NC (2012-2014); Commander of the Special Missions Command, White House Communications Agency, Camp David Presidential Retreat (2010-2012); Commander, Signal Squadron, United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), Fort Bragg, NC (2007-2010); Signal Squadron Operations Officer, USASOC, Fort Bragg, NC (2005-2006); Alpha Company Commander, 112th Signal Battalion (Special Operations) (Airborne), Fort Bragg, NC (2004-2005); Signal Squadron Executive Officer,

USASOC, Fort Bragg, NC (2002-2004); Tactical Communications Troop Commander, USASOC, Fort Bragg, NC (2000-2002); Communications Officer for the Combatant Commander at United States Southern Command, Quarry Heights, Panama/Miami, FL (1997-2000); and Signal Officer, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment (Airborne), Fort Benning, GA (1996).

His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC), Legion of Merit with 2 OLCs, Bronze Star with 1 OLC, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with 3 OLCs, Combat Action Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, and the Ranger Tab. Other awards include the Presidential Service Badge, the Army Staff Badge, and the Signal Corps Regimental Bronze Order of Mercury. of Nevada, Reno, and is committed to fostering innovation and investment throughout Nevada.

### **Margarita Benjamin, Managing Director, U.S. Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority**



Margarita Benjamin provides strategic oversight of the Territory’s flagship incentives programs, including the Economic Development Commission (EDC), the Sustainable Tourism through Arts-Based Revenue Stream (STARS) Program, and the Hotel Development tax incentive program. A respected leader with more than three decades of service to the USVIEDA, Ms. Benjamin is widely regarded for her unparalleled institutional knowledge, policy expertise, and commitment to advancing the Territory’s economic competitiveness.

Throughout her tenure, she has played a central role in shaping and strengthening the EDC program—one of the USVI’s most powerful tools for attracting investment and fostering job creation. Since 2002, she has held key leadership positions within the Commission, including Director of Applications and Director of Compliance, where she modernized processes, enhanced regulatory integrity, and ensured the long-term credibility and sustainability of the program.

Before joining the EDC, Ms. Benjamin built a strong professional foundation in accounting and office management across the retail, real estate, and hospitality sectors. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Finance from American Intercontinental University and has completed advanced professional training with the International Economic Development Council, the Council of Ethical Organizations, the USDA Graduate School, and the Institute of Internal Auditors. She is a Certified Compliance Professional, Certified Compliance Executive, and Certified Public Manager—credentials that underscore her expertise in regulatory leadership and organizational governance.

Ms. Benjamin also contributes her expertise to the community as Chair of the U.S. Virgin Islands Small Business Development Advisory Board. Deeply committed to public service, she has long championed efforts that enhance education and quality of life for Virgin Islands residents. She currently serves as President of the U.S. Virgin Islands

Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students Association, Inc., and Treasurer of the Charlotte Amalie High School Class of 1983, Inc. She has previously held governance roles with the National Parent Teacher Association, Clear Blue Sky, Inc., and the U.S. Virgin Islands Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council, among many other nonprofit and civic organizations.

A dedicated member and worship leader at Faith Christian Fellowship Church Alive in Christ, Inc., Ms. Benjamin also serves as Vice President of the Church Board and advisor to the Faith Alive Christian Academy.

Born on St. Croix and now residing on St. Thomas, Ms. Benjamin is driven by her lifelong commitment to the progress of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the advancement of its people.

### **Alani Henneman, Assistant Commissioner, U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism**



Assistant Commissioner of Marketing and Communications at the USVI Department of Tourism, is someone who most locals know but don't know the depth of all that she does for the Territory. Approaching her 20<sup>th</sup> year in Tourism, Henneman has worked tirelessly to tell her destination's story. We think it's time to tell *her* story now.

Working at the USVI Department of Tourism since 2004, Alani Henneman rose in the ranks from a public relations manager all the way to her appointment as assistant commissioner in 2020. She has overseen both proactive and reactive efforts to highlight the territory as a warm, welcoming, and accepting destination that offers Americans a convenient escape to the Caribbean. Henneman has helped showcase the destination's vibrant culture, rich culinary traditions and fusions, eco-tourism, adventure, and historic national treasures. The USVI's success, especially following the pandemic, has largely been due to her work.

Her leadership has guided the department through communications and logistical efforts following Hurricanes Irma and Maria and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. She is passionate about elevating local voices, particularly those of women, in their ventures to create businesses, nurture wellness in the community and help share the story of the US Virgin Islands.

Henneman's story of being a female leader in the Caribbean tourism industry who has risen to the top while also lifting up her community in the process is truly inspiring.

### **Governor Albert Bryan, U.S. Virgin Islands**



Albert Bryan Jr. is the ninth-elected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands. He is an entrepreneur, non-profit executive, and tireless and compassionate advocate for the economic and political advancement of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. A former commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor and Chairman of the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority Board, Governor Bryan is boldly leading the U.S. Virgin Islands towards unprecedented economic growth and infrastructure expansion. The Bryan-Roach Administration is spearheading a multi-billion-dollar recovery and rebuilding effort to transform the territory's critical infrastructure in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

In collaboration with the 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Governor Bryan developed and implemented a plan that placed the Government Employees Retirement System, one of the country's most underfunded public pension systems, on a path to solvency after more than 30 years of underinvestment. Bryan also boldly and effectively led the U.S. Virgin Islands through the COVID-19 pandemic keeping Virgin Islanders safe while protecting the territory's tourism-driven economy from collapse.

Under his leadership, in FY 2024 the U.S. Virgin Islands achieved an unparalleled increase in the territory's tourism economy, unemployment reached historic lows, massive hurricane recovery projects were undertaken and new homeownership programs were introduced.

Governor Bryan continues to make progress on his mission to lead the U.S. Virgin Islands to be number one in tourism, technology, and talent throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

He is the proud father of two daughters, Aliyah and Sumayah.

### **Sarah Bauerle Danzman, Term Member, Council on Foreign Relations**



I am a political scientist and associate professor of international studies at the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. I am also the director of the Tobias Center for Innovation in International Development here at IU, a non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

In 2019-2020 I was a policy advisor and CFIUS case analyst at the Office of Investment Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. In this role I helped lead the State Department's role in the inter-agency process to review foreign investment transactions for national security purposes. This opportunity was made possible by the Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellowship (CFR-IAF).

My first book, [Merging Interests: When Domestic Firms Influence FDI Policy](#) (Cambridge University Press, December 2019), examined how access and cost of financing influenced domestic firms' policy preferences over foreign investment regulation from the 1970s to 2010s, using firm, industry, and country-level data along

with process tracing case studies. The book, and its related award-winning journal article, contribute to our understanding of how domestic firms attitudes toward global integration is conditioned by the local financing environment. Firms will often advocate for economic openness when they are finance constrained, but will be more supportive of policies of exclusion when governments provide them ample credit on subsidized terms.

My current single-authored book project, provisionally titled *Securitized Political Economy*, stems from my experience working at the State Department. It examines the policy preferences and influence strategies of globally oriented businesses in the context of increased geopolitical tension and assertive use of economic statecraft through investment screening, export controls, and policies toward foreign students.

With my co-author Sophie Meunier, I have built and maintain a dataset on the characteristics of investment screening mechanisms across OECD countries. We have several papers forthcoming or under review as well as a book manuscript in preparation that explores the rise of investment screening mechanisms across advanced economies

With my co-author Will Winecoff, I am a Principal Investigator on a National Science Foundation grant that develops a dataset of political-business connections between all registered firms globally, their managers and major shareholders, and politicians holding legislative office or a position in the executive cabinet. Our work on this project unveils how patterns of political-business connections vary across countries, that the value of these connections also varies across industry and local context, and how the prevalence of such connections affects public perception of corruption and trust in institutions.

### **Angela Jerabek, Executive Director, BARR Center**



Angela Jerabek is the founder and executive director of [BARR Center](#). Jerabek developed the BARR model 20 years ago and has expanded it from one school in the Midwest to more than 200 schools throughout the U.S., serving over 200,000 students.

Jerabek has published five books and several op-eds and articles in various publications. Often looked to for her expertise, Jerabek has been featured in *USA Today*, *National Public Radio*, and *CNBC*. In the fall of 2020, she was a co-panelist with John B. King Jr., the 10th United States Secretary of Education under President Barack Obama. Jerabek has presented at the White House at the “Evidence in

Education Roundtable” in 2016 as well as at International Education events.

In 2021, Jerabek was selected as the Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s National “Wisest Wonk,” a contest designed to generate conversation surrounding critical issues within education reform. In fall of 2020, she was awarded the Donald McNeely Center Social Entrepreneur of the Year by the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University.

**Eric Sonnier, Executive Director, U.S. Virgin Islands Research & Technology Park (RTPark)**



Eric has over a decade of experience building and scaling tech-enabled businesses. He's raised millions as Founder and CEO, and for years, has leveraged his operational, marketing, and business development experience to help founders develop, grow, and scale their ventures. Before becoming the Executive Director of the RTPark, Eric led the Territory's first tech-based accelerator program, Accelerate VI, where he helped founders raise more than \$7 Million in investments and grow revenue more than \$4 Million.

Prior to joining the RTPark, Eric was Co-Founder and CEO of Oliver Technologies, an enterprise software company that helps financial institutions scale legal models with real-time vendor collaboration and centralized compliance. Eric was also Co-Founder of venture capital backed, Y Combinator (S14) company, Local Lift, which specialized in alternative lending for small businesses through an online marketplace platform. Prior to entering the world of entrepreneurship, Eric worked as a Strategy & Operations Consultant for Deloitte, working on a variety of business process and strategy projects for Fortune 500 companies.

Eric has a BBA from the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas in Austin and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He lives on St. Croix with his wife and three young children.