

For Immediate Release
November 18, 2009

Media Contacts:
Mary Kay Marquison, MPEA
312-791-6237

**CHICAGO'S CONVENTION INDUSTRY LEADERS UNITE TO ENSURE
CITY REMAINS A PREMIER CONVENTION DESTINATION**

Task Force to do a full review of all aspects of doing business in Chicago

CHICAGO – In a call to action, Chicago's convention industry leaders vowed to develop necessary solutions to keep Chicago as a top national convention and tradeshow destination. MPEA and CCTB officials, labor leaders from all convention-related trades, show contractors and hospitality industry leaders, including hotels and restaurants, along with representatives from the Offices of Governor Quinn, Mayor Daley, Speaker Madigan and Senate President Cullerton convened a Task Force today to review all aspects of doing convention business in Chicago.

John Gates, Chairman of the Board of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) said, "We are bringing all of Chicago's convention industry leaders together to make unified decisions to dramatically improve all aspects of the way we do business. We are trying to turn lemons into lemonade – we get it, we understand our customers' concerns and we are going to be aggressive in finding a solution together."

"We will look to revise our business model to determine how Chicago can be more competitive against other convention cities that have an advantage over us because their financial structure allows them to lower their cost and undercut Chicago pricing," said Juan Ochoa, Chief Executive Officer of MPEA. "Unlike many of our competitors, no government dollars fund any aspect of our operating budget, we rely 100% on our show revenue to operate our convention space – which puts us at a disadvantage."

"Chicago is a world-class convention destination that offers the best in the business with its unmatched central location, the country's largest and best convention facilities, a dedicated workforce, a vibrant and exciting city, and a business experience that is second to none," said Tim Roby, President and CEO, Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau. "Exhibitors and attendees do real business here, making sales and networking both on and off the convention floor."

The Task Force convened today will do a top-to-bottom review of all aspects of the convention business in Chicago and will meet on an on-going basis to develop a plan to reduce costs while maintaining the highest quality of services, with the goal of maintaining Chicago's well-deserved reputation as a premier convention destination.

#