

VAPDC Summer Series: Four Thursdays in July
Thursday, July 16, 2020
Travel, Tourism and Leisure – Seeking to be Stronger

SPEAKER PROFILES



**Rita D. McClenny, President and Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Tourism Corporation**

Rita D. McClenny serves as president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, a state agency charged with marketing the Commonwealth as a premier travel destination and film location. The mission of VTC is to expand domestic and international in-bound travel and motion picture production to generate revenue and employment in Virginia.

A native Virginian, Ms. McClenny received a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from Fisk University. She was born and raised in Southampton County and presently resides in the City of Richmond.

As president and CEO, Ms. McClenny serves on the boards of directors for the U.S. Travel Association, the National Council of State Tourism Directors, the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association, the Aerospace Advisory Council, the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, Venture Richmond, the Virginia Film Festival, and the African American Cultural Resources Task Force. In addition, Ms. McClenny is involved in volunteer outreach and community organizations serving the Commonwealth.

Tourism and film are instant revenue generators for Virginia. In 2018, tourism in Virginia generated \$26 billion in revenue, supported 235,000 jobs and over \$1.8 billion in state and local taxes. The travel industry is the 6th largest employer in Virginia. In 2016, the film and motion picture industry's overall contribution to the state's economy totaled \$696.8 million, and created 4,287 jobs, and generated \$27.1 million in state and local tax revenue.



**Eric Terry, President
Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association**

A graduate of the Hospitality and Tourism Management School at Virginia Tech, Eric has a long and deep understanding of the hospitality and tourism industries. As President of VRLTA, Eric Terry leads a membership of over 1,500 from across the Commonwealth in efforts before the General Assembly and with industry events.

Eric Terry joined VRLTA from Redstone Companies Hospitality and has over three decades of experience and business success within the entertainment, hotel, casino resort, and events industries. Prior to joining Redstone, Eric was Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Benchmark Hospitality and the President of Xelerate Group, a company he launched in 2002. He grew the Xelerate Group into an organization with a recognized specialty in national events marketing, sponsorship partnering, media buying, and celebrity appearances including partnerships with NASCAR, Chuck Norris, The Food Network, and Indy Racing League. Prior to that, he was Vice President of Sales & Marketing for Malibu Entertainment Worldwide, Inc. and also served as Corporate Marketing Director and Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Hollywood Casino Corporation/Pratt Hotel Corporation. Eric has held leadership positions with Bristol Hotels, Marriott Hotels and Resorts, and for Anheuser Busch's Busch Gardens.

He is Chairman in the International Society of Hotel Associations, is on the Advisory Board of the Virginia Tech Hospitality and Tourism Management Department, is a Board Member of the American Hotel & Lodging Association, and is a former President and Vice President of the Crowne Plaza Marketing Association.



**Cassidy Rasnick, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade
Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation
Commonwealth of Virginia**

Cassidy Rasnick serves as Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade for Rural Economic Development. Prior to her appointment, Rasnick managed the state's economic development efforts for two of the Commonwealth's largest industries – agriculture and forestry – while serving as manager of the office of business development at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and previously, as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for Governor McAuliffe. Before joining the McAuliffe administration, she worked for the Virginia Manufacturers

Association and the Virginia Craft Brewers Guild. Rasnick also spent more than five years working for United State Senator Mark Warner.

A native of Botetourt County, Rasnick is a graduate of James Madison University and the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership.