

ALBA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES/H&R BLOCK NAMED TO THE TOP 100

H&R Block Celebrates John Alexander Alba, EA/CAA for his Leadership and Commitment to Community Involvement

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (02/01/2023)-H&R Block (NYSE:HRB) recently announced its Top 100 Franchisees in the nation at the company's One Team Convention in Las Vegas. Every year, the company recognizes the top franchisees for business performance for their success. John Alexander Alba, EA/CAA an H&R Block Franchise owner was among the Top 100 franchisees recognized.

"Our franchisees' resilient and bold behaviors were instrumental to our success in the 2022 tax season," said Bob Moretti, Senior Vice President of Franchise Operations at H&R Block. "We are honored to recognize our associates and franchisees who demonstrate a daily commitment to clients, while also giving back to their communities."

H&R Block Inc has more than 10,000 offices globally and to be named in the Top 100 in the nation is a remarkable accomplishment. John Alba and his family have been in practice for 59 years in the City of Norwalk. Their office is located at the corner of Alondra & Pioneer. John made it clear he would not have been able to achieve this status without his incredible and professional team.



John Alexander Alba, EA/CAA (middle) receives the Top 100 Franchisee award from Christopher Lohner, Western Regional Director H&R Block and Paul Dolly, Franchise Consultant California-Hawaii.



Alba Professional Services/H&R Block Award Winning Team. Pictured here are (l to r) Grant Alexander Alba, Christopher Lohner, Jael Gutierrez, John Alba, Elizabeth Moreno, Paul Dolly, Yury Aguilar, Jovani Zavala, Rocio Corza, Miguel Medina, Ana Laura Huerta and Jonathan Huerta.

BRUCE'S PRIME RIB AND SPIRITS HOST MULTI CHAMBER MIXER

On Thursday, February 23rd, the Norwalk Chamber held a multi chamber mixer at Bruce's Prime Rib. Also attending were members from the La Mirada, Pico Rivera and Santa Fe Springs Chambers. Jeannie Mayer-Curato and Anthony Curato were the hosts of our mixer, providing attendees with delicious appetizers and sodas. On the menu were chicken quesadillas, potato skins, jalapeño poppers and a cheese tray. Members and guests from the four chambers were able to mix and mingle and find out more about each other's businesses. Our host Anthony Curato shared the history of this family-owned business with the guests. Bruce's has been a fixture in the community since the early 1960's and still provides the best prime rib in town today.

After hearing from Anthony, self-introductions were provided by everyone at the mixer with the last introduction saved for our California State Senator Bob Archuleta, who dropped by to meet everyone from our four Chambers. After Senator Archuleta spoke to the group, Norwalk American Legion Commander Melissa Braciov shared that the Senator was working to help the Legion with much needed renovations of their club house. The event ended with raffle prizes and shared information about upcoming events. Once again, we thank Jeannie and Tony for hosting our Multi Chamber Networking Mixer and encourage you to visit our website at www.norwalkchamber.com to find out about upcoming networking events.



Members from the Norwalk, La Mirada, Pico Rivera and Santa Fe Springs Chambers at the Multi Chamber Mixer at Bruce's Prime Rib and Spirits. Visiting the Chambers is State Senator Bob Archuleta, District 30, pictured in the center of the photo.

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, March 30th
4pm to 8pm
Don Knabe Golf Center

10th Annual Spring Swing



Ambassadors Joe Derthick and Denise Urtiaga, Kustom Made Graphics are greeting attendees and introducing them around at the Mixer.



Attending the Multi Chamber Mixer are Danika Mendoza, IBE Digital and Norwalk La Mirada School Board Vice President Jose Rios, TNG Realty.



Finding out more about each other's business are Cynthia Deleon, Department of Rehabilitation and Judy Kirby, Interior Solutions Now.



Networking at the Multi Chamber Mixer are (l to r) Commander Melissa Braicov, Norwalk American Legion Post 359, Board Member Dora Sandoval, 605 Kiwanis Club, Natalie LeGaspi, Soroptimist International Norwalk/Santa Fe Springs, and Tammye McDuff, The Olive Grove.



Meeting new connections at the mixer are (l to r) Noel Jaimes, Executive Director La Mirada Chamber, Kathie Fink, President/CEO Santa Fe Springs Chamber, Glenn Quezada, Glenn Quezada Interior and Tom Jackson, (ret) Cerritos College Board of Trustees.



Norwalk Chamber Board President Rich LeGaspi, TNT Fireworks with California State Senator Bob Archuleta.

State Senator Bob Archuleta with Norwalk American Legion Commander Melissa Braicov and District Staff Fred Zermeno.



Getting ready to network are (l to r) Jessica and Elvy Cifuentes, The UPS Store, Nancy Gutzmer, American Cancer Society and Alicia Fombona, United Real Estate.



Cynthia Deleon of the Department of Rehabilitation with State Senator Bob Archuleta.



Sharing business information are (l to r) Mike O'Rielly, Sal Rediscovery Center, Mark McNeil, Interior Solutions Now and Earl of Sal Rediscovery Center.



Sharing business information are (l to r) Mike O'Rielly, Sal Rediscovery Center, Mark McNeil, Interior Solutions Now and Earl of Sal Rediscovery Center.

Norwalk Chamber of Commerce
14783 Carmenita Road, Norwalk, CA 90650

PRESORTED STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SANTA FE SPRINGS, CA
PERMIT NO. 1000

NORWALK CHAMBER BUSINESS CONNECTIONS (NCBC) is the Official Publication of the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce.

Norwalk Chamber of Commerce

14783 Carmenita Road
Norwalk, CA 90650
Phone: 562.404.0909
FAX: 562.404.0911
Monday - Friday 9:30am - 5:30pm
www.norwalkchamber.com
info@norwalkchamber.com

Facebook:
http://on.fb.me/oB5EUM

PRESIDENT
RICH LEGASPI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
EDITOR, NCBC
CAREN SPILSBURY

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friday, March 3rd

Ambassador Meeting
12noon @ Chamber Office

Saturday, March 4th

Ribbon Cutting
Sprouts Farmers Market @ 8am

Monday, March 6th

- Coffee with a Cop
Mariachi Bakery @ 9am
- 100th Anniversary Coffee Kick Off
12noon @ Norwalk Chamber

Wednesday, March 15th

Board of Directors
9am via ZOOM

Monday, March 20th

Multi Chamber Mixer
LA Kings/Crypto.com Stadium @ 6pm

Thursday, March 23rd

Coffee & Conversation
9am @ Chick-fil-A
Norwalk Fitness Village

Saturday, March 25th

- Ribbon Cutting
Something Good LA @ 10am
- Ribbon Cutting
Ladybug Dental @ 12:30pm

Thursday, March 30th

10th Annual 9-Hole Golf Tournament
4pm to 7pm
Don Knabe Golf Center

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, June 14th

100th Anniversary Installation & Awards Dinner

SPONSORS



RENEWING MEMBERS

The following companies and individuals renewed their membership with the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce and the services we provide are made possible by their support.

22 Years
Teachers Association of Norwalk/ La Mirada
President, Maureen Quiros Gray
562-868-6251
tanlapres@tri-cityed.org

17 Years
Northgate Gonzalez Market
Alicia Valadez
714-778-3784
alicia.valadez@northgatemarkets.com

10 Years
US Bank
Yovani Flores
562-868-3271
www.usbank.com

L & W Services
James Etherton
562-868-9339
jim@bluetowels.com



Receiving their new member plaque from Board President Rich LeGaspi are Danika Mendoza and Sloan Varing of IBE Digital.

Norwalk Chamber welcomes our new members to the Chamber and congratulations our renewing members. It is more important than ever to use your community connections to build business growth. We encourage all of our members to attend our different networking opportunities and connect up with those that are attending. Chamber members supporting other Chamber members by using each other's services helps build a stronger Chamber and a stronger Chamber builds a stronger community.

Our new member Azar Event Center is a one stop shop for any type of event. Azar is a beautiful new, state of the art Event Center located in Santa Fe Springs, California. It is a perfect destination for Wedding Receptions, Corporate Events, Birthday Celebrations and so much more. Ebie Ghaneian is the owner of Azar Event Center. Here is a little information about business owner Ebie. He is passionate about food; he has a Master's Degree in Business and a Bachelor's Degree in Physics but he loves food. He loves cooking food, creating new menus, experimenting with fusion foods and of course eating food, when he's not in the kitchen his second love is sports, the Lakers are his team although he's been seen at Angel Games, Galaxy Games, the World Cup in Russia and let's not forget the Charger Games, if it requires a field, stadium or ball he'll watch it.

Ebie was born in Iran and immigrated to the United States in 1976 where he finished his education and started his lifelong love affair with Foodservice; he started as a bus boy and learned from the dishwasher up. He has owned several restaurants a hugely successful Catering Company, Café n' Stuff and decided it was time to expand his passion to full event service. The Azar Event Center (named for his wife Azar, his true first love) began as a dream four years ago, after countless hours, days, weeks and yes years, his dream is now a reality in the form of this beautiful state of the art event center. Chances are if you stop by to take a tour or decide to host your event here Ebie will be around to make sure that you have a truly memorable time. Visit their website at <https://www.azareventcenter.com/>.



President Rich LeGaspi presents the new member plaque to Ebie and the staff of Azar Event Center.



Norwalk Mayor Ana Valencia presents a proclamation to State Senator Bob Archuleta at his recent swearing in ceremony.



Board President Rich LeGaspi presents the membership renewal to Commander Melissa Braicov of American Legion Post 359.



Fred Zermeno, President Whittier Regional Symphony receives his new member plaque from President Rich LeGaspi.

NEW MEMBERS

Norwalk Florist by Patty's Pretty Flowers
Patricia Zavala
11947 Firestone Blvd.
Norwalk, CA 90650
562-863-4478
mynorwalkflorist@yahoo.com
www.floristnorwalk.com

Bravo Financial Solutions
Juan Bravo de Rueda
562-314-7097
juan@bravofs.us
www.bravofs.us

AM PM Ideal Pet Care
Vita Martinez
13220 San Antonio Dr.
Norwalk, CA 90650
562-282-9639
www.amppidealpetcare.com

NORWALK CHAMBER NEW MEMBERS AND RENEWALS



Zen's Tea House is presented an award for the Holiday Décor Contest hosted by the City of Norwalk. Zen's is located at 12848 Pioneer Blvd. in Norwalk.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Norwalk Chamber members,

As we move into March, the Big News is the Norwalk Chamber will begin celebrating our 100 days to 100 on March 6th. We invite you to drop by the Chamber office that day between 12noon and 1pm to help us kick off our 100-day countdown to our 100th Anniversary that will take place on June 14th.

This is a huge accomplishment for our Norwalk Chamber. According to the world wide web, how many companies in the US are 100 years old? Apparently, says Mayer, there are only around 1,000 companies that have survived more than 100 years in the US. That is less than half a percent of all the businesses in the US. So, we are blessed to still be here serving our Community of Norwalk and its businesses.

We will be having many events this year to celebrate this accomplishment. One event will be the 9-Hole Golf Tournament on March 30th at the Don Knabe Golf Center. Please contact the Chamber office if you would like to play or have a team that would like to play.

The Chamber has been here for the community and our business helping celebrate when a new business opens. Spouts Farmers Market will be opening this weekend, and this is just one more business starting out in Norwalk. The Chamber has always been here to help new businesses and veteran businesses. We are like family and with that being said we have lost one of our family members this past month. Ambassador Craig Wicks from Budget Rental & Car Sales has left us way too early. Craig always had a smiling face as he drove in the Sanchez Halloween parade every year, and he will be missed.

When you support our local business community in Norwalk you support more than just that business. Right now, we all need each other so we encourage you to shop local and support local. Your Chamber Board and Staff are here to help your business succeed in our community. If you need any resources, reach out to the office to see how we can help.

Be safe and have a great month.

Respectfully,

Rich LeGaspi
2022-2023 President, Norwalk Chamber of Commerce
TNT Fireworks

Appellate Court Backs Use of Arbitration in Employment

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit this week invalidated a law contested by the California Chamber of Commerce, ensuring that arbitration can continue to be used as an efficient forum in resolving disputes by employees and employers in California. The CalChamber hailed the ruling in *Chamber v. Bonta* invalidating AB 51 (Lorena Gonzalez; D-San Diego), which prohibited employers from requiring employees to sign agreements to arbitrate any disputes arising from the employee's employment. "This is a win for all Californians," said CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barrera. "Until there is meaningful reform to our litigation environment — including PAGA — arbitration remains an efficient, cost-effective way to resolve disputes in a timely and fair manner for both employers and employees."

The CalChamber led a large coalition of employers in challenging AB 51, arguing that it conflicted with federal law. If allowed to remain in effect, AB 51 would have resulted in more litigation, imposed significant delays in California's justice system and increased costs for businesses and workers alike. Further, as stated in the legislative analysis of AB 51 and in the complaint itself, the Supreme Court has repeatedly held that state laws singling out arbitration agreements for disfavored treatment are preempted. This is the primary reason that a predecessor bill to AB 51, AB 3080 (Lorena Gonzalez; D-San Diego), was vetoed by Governor Jerry Brown in 2018. CalChamber and the employer coalition filed their initial motion to invalidate and stop enforcement of AB 51 on December 6, 2019. On December 30, 2019, Judge Mueller issued a temporary restraining order, halting enforcement of AB 51 until the matter could be resolved. A recent study comparing employment arbitrations and litigation found that employee-claimants were greater than three times more likely to win in arbitration, more likely to receive high monetary awards in arbitration, and more likely to spend less time in arbitration than in litigation. Maintaining arbitration as a manner to resolve disputes is benefit to employees and employers.

Cal/OSHA COVID Rule Shifts to 'Non-Emergency' Text to Remain in Effect to February 3, 2025

After years of rapid change, the potentially final form of California's COVID-19 regulation has been filed with the Secretary of State and went into effect on February 3. On December 15, 2022, the Cal/ OSHA Standards Board voted to transition the state's COVID-19 regulation from a short-term, "emergency" regulation (also known as an "ETS") to a non-emergency, two-year regulation. The final approved text (available at <https://www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/documents/COVID-19-Prevention-Non-Emergency-txtbrdconsider.pdf>) made various changes to the regulation, and has a sunset of February 3, 2025 for most provisions. After the December vote, there was some confusion as to exactly when the non-emergency rule would go into effect. The answer was: "sometime in the next 30 working days, whenever the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) finishes reviewing it and approves it" That answer wasn't exactly helpful for California's workplace-safety concerned individuals (both labor and management) as we wanted to know exactly when the new rules would go into effect. Sadly, there wasn't any better way to know than to steadily re-check OAL's website until we saw the COVID regulation move from "Proposed Regulations Under Review" to "Recent Actions Taken..." Thankfully, their website is pretty easy to use — and it finally happened! Final Approval On Friday, February 3, the OAL finished their approval, meaning the new COVID-19 non-emergency regulation text is in effect. The changes in the new draft were significant in some areas, including:

- Outbreaks can be ended slightly sooner than under the prior text, which required 0 cases for a two-week period. Now, a workplace can have 1 case in a two-week period, and still consider the outbreak ended.
- Exclusion pay will no longer be required under the regulation, but workers still will be able to seek compensation under workers' compensation, as well as under normal sick leave law.
- The new definition of "close contact" is firmly in the text — so workplaces should measure whether they are larger or smaller than 400,000 cubic feet to determine who qualifies as a close contact.

Employers should be aware that the State of Emergency is due to end February 28, per the Governor's October 2022 press release, available here. To be very clear: the State of Emergency ending has no effect on the regulation's legal authority, or substantive requirements. The commonsense response is: "... but shouldn't the state of emergency change things? And shouldn't its end change things?" And yes, states of emergency do change things — including allowing the Governor broader powers to act quickly or use funds differently — but, sadly, the state emergency ending does not change employers' COVID obligations under Cal/ OSHA's regulation. They still have to comply for the next two years. Text in Effect Until 2025 If you're looking for a small silver lining, here's one: this text will remain in effect until February 3, 2025. Minimal changes are expected between now and then. Cal/OSHA Standards Board members and staff both seem focused on catching up on the workload that existed pre-pandemic — so employers are hopeful that this will be the last significant change on the state's COVID-19 regulation for a long time ... or, at least, two years!

Staff Contact: Robert Moutrie

- Creating a Strong Local Economy
- Promoting the Community

The Norwalk Chamber of Commerce urges you to spend your money locally to support the business community and protect jobs.

Local sales tax dollars support basic city services. When you shop in Norwalk, you are paying for:

- Public Safety Services
- Street Repairs
- Recreation Programs
- And Much More**

1923



2023

100th

ANNIVERSARY

KICK OFF

CELEBRATION

Join the Norwalk Chamber as we kick off our
100 days to 100 celebration.

When: Monday, March 6th

Where: Norwalk Chamber Office

14783 Carmenita Rd. Norwalk CA 90650

Time: 12noon

After 3 Weeks of Storms, What's State Water Outlook?

Following a barrage of storms at the end of December and beginning of January, California made a quick about-face from critically dry conditions to floods across the state. The abrupt change exemplifies California's boom-and-bust patterns in precipitation in a condensed period of time. It also highlights how important it is to be prepared for the lows as well as the highs when it comes to rainfall.

Atmospheric Rivers

In recent weeks, many areas of the state received much higher-than-average rainfall. The atmospheric rivers helped raise water levels in reservoirs across the state, many of which were at very low levels in early December.

The high flows have raised Shasta and Oroville reservoirs to their highest levels in the last 2.5 years. Snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is well over average for this time of year, with many sensor locations showing snowpack at more than 200% of normal. Hopefully, this snow will melt slowly and keep rivers and reservoirs full into the spring.

If the last few years have taught us anything, however, it is that water supply in California is volatile. All the recent precipitation has downgraded the state from extreme drought to severe drought. This means that California is experiencing flood events while still facing significant drought conditions. Although it may seem like a contradiction in terms, this is the reality.

Water Storage/Conveyance

This reality also means that investing in new water storage and conveyance infrastructure is important for dry times as well as wet times. For instance, reservoirs can use excess flows from atmospheric river events to replenish stores lost during drought events.

At the same time, those excess flows also can be redirected to help recharge groundwater. Moreover, functional conveyance also can help move flows to where water can be stored and keep floodwaters away from communities.

Sites Reservoir

For example, the proposed Sites Reservoir, which would be a new lake situated in Colusa County, would have been able to capture 120,000 acre-feet of water between January 3–15, 2023, if it had been operational.

As river levels continue to run high, the reservoir could have diverted more water over time. Later, these stored flows would have been released in dry years for communities, businesses and the environment.

The Sites project, which is slated to receive Proposition 1 bond funds, is seeking necessary permits and aims to break ground in late 2024 or early 2025.

A quick calculation shows what this one project could have meant for California: a single acre-foot (enough water to cover an acre of land one-foot deep — 326,000 gallons) usually can meet the annual indoor and outdoor water needs of at least one to two households.

Groundwater Recharge

Irrigation districts in the Fresno area used high storm flows to flood farmland, allowing water to percolate into the ground in an effort to recharge groundwater. These efforts are new, due to regulatory hurdles that have slowed attempts to divert high storm flows for recharge purposes.

The Governor's March 2022 Executive Order, for instance, exempted such recharge projects from certain regulatory approvals, meaning that these projects could come online in order to utilize the storm systems early this year.

Water Infrastructure

Finally, the ability to move water from where it falls as precipitation to where it can be used or stored for later use is important. This can allow more water to be saved rather than lost as runoff or lost when conveyance capacity is reached.

If we expect California to receive more precipitation in shorter periods of time, properly sized conveyance infrastructure will be essential to ensuring that sufficient flows are saved for a non-rainy day.

Staff Contact: Brenda Bass

LABOR LAW CORNER

What are the requirements of California's new bereavement leave law?

With 2023 in full swing, many employers are reviewing and updating employee handbooks and policies. The new year should include adopting or updating an existing bereavement leave policy to comply with California's new bereavement leave law. Effective January 1, 2023, California requires employers to provide eligible employees with up to five days of leave upon the death of family member. The law applies to all private employers with five or more employees and all public employers. (*Government Code Section 12945.7*).

Eligibility/Qualifying Family Members

An employee is eligible for bereavement leave if they have been employed for at least 30 days prior to the beginning of the leave. A qualifying family member is a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, domestic partner or parent-in-law as defined in the California Family Rights Act. (*Government Code Section 12945.7 (a)(1) (3)*). An employee can use bereavement leave for each qualifying occurrence. This means that an employee can take up to five days of bereavement leave for each death of a family member.

Timing of Leave

The five days of bereavement leave do not have to be taken consecutively; leave can be intermittent. However, the employee must complete the bereavement leave within three months of the date of the family member's death. (*Government Code Section 12945.7 (c) (d)*).

Documentation Required

An employer can request that an employee seeking bereavement leave provide documentation to support the leave. Documentation may include: death certificate, published obituary, or written verification of death, burial or memorial services from a mortuary, funeral home, burial society, crematorium, religious institution, or government agency. If documentation is requested, an employee must provide it to their employer within 30 days of the first day of leave. Any documentation provided by an employee must be kept confidential and cannot be disclosed, except to internal personnel, legal counsel or as required by law. (*Government Code Section 12945.7 (f) (i)*).

Payment for Leave

Whether leave is paid or unpaid depends on an employer's existing bereavement leave policy. If an employer does not have an existing leave policy, all five days may be unpaid. While on leave, however, an employee is entitled to use vacation, personal leave, accrued and available sick leave or compensatory time off that is otherwise available to the employee. If a company has an existing bereavement leave policy, the law requires employers to provide leave according to their policy. If the employer policy provides less than five days of leave, the employer must provide additional bereavement leave so that an employee has no less than five days of bereavement leave. For example, if an employer's existing bereavement leave policy provides for three days of paid leave, an employee is entitled to take two additional days of unpaid bereavement leave and may use accrued paid leave for the unpaid days. (*Government Code Section 12945.7 (e)*).

Collective Bargaining Agreement Exception

The bereavement leave law does not apply to employees who are covered by a valid collective bargaining agreement if the collective bargaining agreement expressly provides for all the following (*Government Code Section 12945.7 (k)*).

- Bereavement leave equivalent to that provided by this law;
- Wages, hours of work and working conditions of employees;
- Premium wage rates for all overtime worked;
- A regular hourly rate of pay at least 30% above the state minimum wage.

Anti-Discrimination Requirements

The bereavement leave law prohibits discrimination, interference or retaliation relating to an individual's exercise of rights to bereavement leave. (*Government Code Section 12945.7 (g)(h)*). Employers should review their employee handbooks and policies to ensure that any existing bereavement policies are updated to comply with the new bereavement leave law. If your company does not have a bereavement leave policy, now is a good time to add one to your employee handbook.

Column based on questions asked by callers on the Labor Law Helpline, a service to California Chamber of Commerce preferred and executive members. For expert explanations of labor laws and Cal/OSHA regulations, not legal counsel for specific situations, call (800) 348-2262 or submit your question at www.hrcalifornia.com.



St. Lic. #271767

NORWALK/LA MIRADA

Plumbing

Heating & Air Conditioning

11661 Firestone Blvd. • Norwalk

info@laplumber.com

(562) 868-7777

\$20
OFF
WITH
THIS
AD!