



## PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION OF BLACK JOURNALISTS SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON OUR 2025 CONVENTION BID

*Philadelphia, PA* - In unison, the executive leadership of Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists (PABJ), is issuing a formal statement of protest to the National Association of Black Journalists' (NABJ) Executive Board regarding the site selection process and subsequent discussions relating to the 2023 & 2025 bids. We affirm the right of any board to make its own sound business decisions. This statement specifically objects to actions & conduct of members of the NABJ Board who diminished and denounced the efforts of the Philadelphia bid with inaccurate and false statements regarding our offer. Those actions were distasteful, unprofessional and sullied the hard work of our chapter members and partners.

Here is the truth. At the request of many NABJ & PABJ members and especially founders who expressed strong interest in being "home" for the organizations' 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, our local executive board convened regional leaders and partners to formulate a fair and feasible package that specifically addressed costs and other concerns specifically expressed about our city by NABJ. The resulting bid proposal addressed them with many concessions including:

**A \$75,000 all-cash incentive to NABJ in support of a Philadelphia convention.** This was in addition to other incentives including significant discounts on A/V services, meeting spaces & supplies and a fall 2024 board meeting totalling over \$646,000. Our bid was certainly not a "last place" option as the board asserts. *How much more would have been needed to subsidize the organization's annual meeting?*

Affordability for members was also a big concern. Our bid included competitive rates for all members, as low as \$169 at the city's newest hotel and another offer at the same rate that included breakfast. **The max rate offered at the main hotel was \$209 per night which also included a discount on food and beverage costs for all attendees.** *Maybe the board prefers hotels, like Miami, where members are forced to pay \$40 per meal with no access to more affordable food options.*

Booking dates were admittedly tight in a popular summer destination city like Philadelphia. But our bid addressed this with several options. **One, of many, included Sunday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025. If NABJ chose to come during that time, partners offered to fully sponsor both an NABJ 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Float in the annual city parade plus VIP accommodations for NABJ members at the headliner concert that evening.** In an act of professional misconduct, the board leaked partial details of it in their effort to dampen the total bid. In 2018 alone, PHLCVB booked over 600 meetings, demonstrating their ability to deliver options for organizations who wish to be in the city. *We'd rather the board admit upfront that they did not wish to be in the city rather than wasting our time and resources.*

The passion for NABJ burns strongest in our city and in Region One. This is evidenced with the base of our members across the Northeast. There are 200+ current PABJ members alone not counting the active membership bases in our adjoining sister chapters. **The fact that the current executive board voted to exclude any Region One convention city through 2026 shows complete disregard and under-appreciation of our chapter and region.** In response and in concert with our friends and sponsors, PABJ plans to pursue a full slate of regionally focused programs that will aim to engage and support our members across the Northeast. Planning for these events is underway and we will unveil a full calendar in January 2020.

**PABJ disputes erroneous reports of abnormally low attendance rates for 2011.** They directly contradict a post-convention message sent in August 2011 from then-President Greg Lee praising attendance of "more than 2,500 attendees that exceeded our expectations". Earlier messages from NABJ noted that pre-convention rates "were up 30%" over 2010. Philadelphia is uniquely situated as a regional and international hub. *Surely the board cannot be asserting that it's easier for members to travel easily to Birmingham and Cleveland?*

Local chapters are the backbone of NABJ's mission. Having national board members publicly demean local, volunteer leaders who do the bulk of our advocacy, engagement and innovation nationwide is wholly unacceptable. However, these actions have revealed board members' true intentions and feelings. We see them fully. No longer will local members support national officeholders or candidates who do not respect or support the concerns or needs of Region 1 members who have faithfully served and supported this organization from its inception. Additionally, PABJ is actively seeking new opportunities to directly engage our local and regional members in conference, training and other activities since our national board is not interested in supporting our members in the areas where we live and work. We plan to unveil these plans in January 2020.