

Four Arizona Legislators Recognized as Champions of Innovation

Sen. Mesnard, Sen. Bravo, Rep. Willmeth, and Rep. Hernandez Recognized by Partnership for Economic Innovation for leadership in Arizona's innovation economy

PHOENIX, AZ, UNITED STATES, September 27, 2024 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Partnership for Economic Innovation \(PEI\)](#), a passionate collective of business and community leaders dedicated to accelerating Arizona's economic opportunities, announced the winners of its second annual Arizona Champions of Innovation Awards.



From left: Grace O'Sullivan, Sen. Mesnard, Rep. Willmeth, John Graham, Sen. Bravo, and Rep. Hernandez

Senator J.D. Mesnard, Senator Flavio Bravo, Representative Justin Willmeth, and Representative Alma Hernandez were recognized for their outstanding leadership and contributions to promoting innovation and strategic economic growth in Arizona.

"Each legislator we've honored this year has played a role in advancing Arizona's innovation economy and bringing prosperity to our state," said John Graham, Chairman and CEO of Sunbelt Holdings and President of the Board for the Partnership for Economic Innovation. "Their commitment nurtures emerging technologies while also strengthening our state's existing industries and workforce. We hope their leadership serves as inspiration for others to join our mission to build a more resilient and inclusive economy that ensures opportunities for all Arizonans."

Winners of the AZ Champions of Innovation Awards were selected by a committee of PEI board members based on the criteria that each awardee demonstrated an understanding of Arizona's innovation economy; showcased their commitment to growing innovation in Arizona; championed support for building world-class education institutions in Arizona; and demonstrated leadership for driving industry-led solutions that address challenges faced by

Arizona businesses.

“These legislators have been consistent proponents of Arizona’s innovation economy. They have supported and encouraged the applied research funding the Arizona Legislature has provided to expand innovation in the state, strengthening the innovation ecosystem and bringing more opportunities to Arizona,” said Graham.

“At the WearTech Applied Research Center, we’ve witnessed several of our project teams validate their devices and bring them into the market because we’re able to collaborate between businesses and universities,” said Kathleen Lee, Director of Applied Research Center for the Partnership for Economic Innovation. “We are grateful to the Arizona Legislature for setting aside these public funds for applied research to help us advance critical research projects.”

“These awardees are actively supporting the groundbreaking ideas of today while laying the foundation to catapult Arizona as a leading innovation economy,” said Chris Camacho, President and CEO of Greater Phoenix Economic Council and PEI Board Member. “By prioritizing policies that empower local businesses and foster cutting-edge research, the commitment of these legislators is creating a more competitive economy and building up the market’s notoriety as a hub for innovation.”

The Partnership for Economic Innovation’s board of directors consists of some of the state’s most prominent business and policy leaders, including John Graham, President and CEO of Sunbelt Holdings; Chris Camacho, President and CEO of Greater Phoenix Economic Council; Chris Zaharis, Executive Vice President of Empire Southwest; Neil Giuliano, President and CEO of Greater Phoenix Leadership; Brad Jannenga, Founder and Executive Chairman of Chassi; Paul Luna, President and CEO of Helios Education Foundation; Grace O’Sullivan, Vice President, Corporate Engagement and Strategic Partnerships, Arizona State University; and David Rousseau, President of Salt River Project. For more information about PEI and its work, visit azpei.org.

ABOUT PARTNERSHIP FOR ECONOMIC INNOVATION

Partnership for Economic Innovation is a passionate collective of business and community leaders dedicated to accelerating Arizona’s economic opportunities. We believe innovators are problem solvers who come from anywhere, if they have access to pathways to do so — which is why PEI is investing in community-building technology and R&D designed to make Arizona more resilient and empower innovators to bring world-changing ideas to market. PEI initiatives include:

- The Connective, Greater Phoenix’s internationally acclaimed Smart Region collaborative, convening cities, industries, and entrepreneurs to lay the open innovation groundwork to solve regional challenges.

- WearTech and Blockchain Applied Research Centers are accelerating the development of

emerging technology products with the potential to radically transform healthcare, keep us safer and more secure.

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