

Entrepreneur and Innovator Jay Bailey, Mayor John Ewing, Jr., to Headline 2025 African American Leadership Conference

OMAHA, NE, UNITED STATES, October 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [African American Leadership Conference](#) (AALC) returns Friday, Oct. 24, with the theme “Dreams & Visions: No Longer Deferred. We Choose to Build Together,” bringing together changemakers, entrepreneurs and community leaders for a day of high-impact networking, learning and economic empowerment.

Held at the Hilton Omaha Downtown, this year’s keynote speakers include Jay Bailey, president and CEO of Atlanta’s Russell Innovation Center for

Entrepreneurs (RICE) and Mayor John Ewing Jr., Omaha’s first Black mayor. Attendees can expect powerful storytelling, strategy-driven breakout sessions and a vibrant marketplace showcasing Black-owned businesses through the Revive Black Business Expo.

As a national powerhouse in advancing Black entrepreneurship, Bailey has a track record of success. Under his leadership, RICE has grown into the world’s largest hub dedicated to Black-owned businesses, supporting more than 600 entrepreneurs and generating more than \$550 million in economic impact across metro Atlanta. His work has been recognized by three U.S. presidents and he’s earned national honors like the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award and the National Point of Light Award. Through RICE and upcoming projects like the Black Land Institute, Bailey is setting a global standard for inclusive innovation, economic empowerment, and community-driven growth.

“The African American Leadership Conference is not just a moment—it’s a movement,” said Willie Barney, CEO, [Empowerment Network](#). “Each year, it brings together leaders and visionaries who are actively shaping the future of our city. This conference is a powerful platform where strategies are shared, partnerships are forged and solutions are accelerated. It is a core point of connection in our Transformation 2030 strategy—merging economic development, leadership cultivation and community revitalization. Together, we’re proving that real, lasting change is



Local and regional leaders participate on panels from the main stage and present in breakout sessions during the African American Leadership Conference. This year’s conference will be held on Friday, Oct. 24.



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*Willie Barney, CEO,
Empowerment Network*

possible when we align around shared purpose and build together."

The 2025 conference is expected to bring more than \$600,000 in positive economic impact to the community. Last year, the conference helped people build new skills and created more than \$137,000 in local spending. This year's event will offer sessions on expanding your network, leadership, financial empowerment, starting a business and community impact. Attendees will leave with real tools to build their careers, grow their businesses and help others.

From national voices to local champions, featured speakers include:

- Willie Barney, CEO and founder, Empowerment Network
- Racquel Henderson, consultant and navigator, Skill Up Omaha!
- Sen. Ashlei Spivey, District 13
- Kendall Minor, chief operations officer, Metropolitan Utilities District
- Dell Gines, chief innovation officer, International Economic Development Council
- Kim Roxie, CEO and Founder, Lamik Beauty

Additional topics include: physical and mental health, productive team building, compelling storytelling, nonprofit management and leadership, financial wealth planning and global partnership. In addition to the keynote and breakout sessions, the AALC will host the Revive Black Business Expo, featuring local entrepreneurs and businesses, offering a platform for networking, exposure and economic development.

The AALC was designed to empower and uplift the African American community and strategic allies by focusing on critical components essential to personal and professional growth. This is done through expert-led sessions, networking opportunities and targeted workshops. This conference aims to provide attendees with valuable skills and knowledge to enhance their careers, improve their health, expand their businesses and engage more deeply in their communities.

"I have been a vendor at the African American Leadership Conference for nearly a decade," said Sharnelle Shelton, CEO, Corescience Biodiagnostics. "It's an event that has allowed me to build meaningful connections, while watching my sales grow year after year. Vending at the conference has helped increase my visibility and notoriety in the community. People genuinely look forward to seeing me there each year!"

Past conference keynote speakers have included Dr. Eric Thomas, New York Times best-selling author, educator and international motivational speaker; Soledad O'Brien, broadcast journalist

and executive producer; Dr. Randal Pinkett, speaker and media personality; and Adewale Adeyemo, former president, Obama Foundation, along with prominent local Omaha business executives and community leaders.

The conference is supported by major sponsors and strategic partners, including: American National Bank, Carver Legacy Center, Charles Lakin Foundation, Mutual of Omaha, My Brother's Keeper Alliance, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Revive! Omaha and the Weitz Family Foundation.

With additional support from the My Brother's Keeper Alliance (MBK Alliance), a program of The Obama Foundation, the Empowerment Network is committed to building safer environments for all residents by increasing educational and career success while reducing violent crime.

To register and learn more, visit <https://www.aalcomaha.com/>.

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