

MCA Texas 2025 Conference Education and Entertainment Programs

MCAA President Brian Hughes

Brian Hughes became President of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America at the association's Annual Convention in Austin, TX, in March 2025.

Brian is the President of Hughes Environmental Engineering, headquartered in Mahwah, NJ. The company, which was founded in 1935 in Jersey City, NJ, is now in its fourth generation of continuous family ownership. Hughes has a significant presence in the commercial and industrial HVAC and Refrigeration market. Its offerings include service, maintenance, retrofit, and design build in the greater New York City region.

Recognizing the importance of ongoing education and industry connections, Brian joined the MCA of New Jersey. He currently serves on the association's Board of Directors, and as a Trustee for the HVACR Education Fund. He is a member of the New Jersey Schedule A Oversight Committee.

Brian's first experience with MCAA was at an MSCA annual conference. He went on to serve alternately as the chair of MSCA's Education and Marketing committees (since combined and renamed the MSCA Education/Marketing Committee). He regularly presented at various educational events around the country before going on to serve on the MSCA Board of Managers. He was elected to the MCAA Board of Directors in 2015. Since that time, he has served on MCAA's Audit, Budget, Education, and Industry Improvement committees. He is the Vice President the John R. Gentile Foundation (JRGF) Board of Trustees.



Guarding against a "Normalization of Deviance" Mike Mullane

Normalization of deviance is a long term phenomenon in which individuals or teams repeatedly accept a lower standard of performance until that lower standard becomes the "norm". Usually, the acceptance of the lower standard occurs because the individual/team is under pressure (budget, schedule, etc.) and perceives it will be too difficult to adhere to the expected standard. Their intention may be to revert to the higher standard when this period of pressure passes. However, by "getting away" with the deviation, it is likely they will do the same thing when the same stressful circumstances arise again. Over time, the individual/team fails to see their actions as deviant.

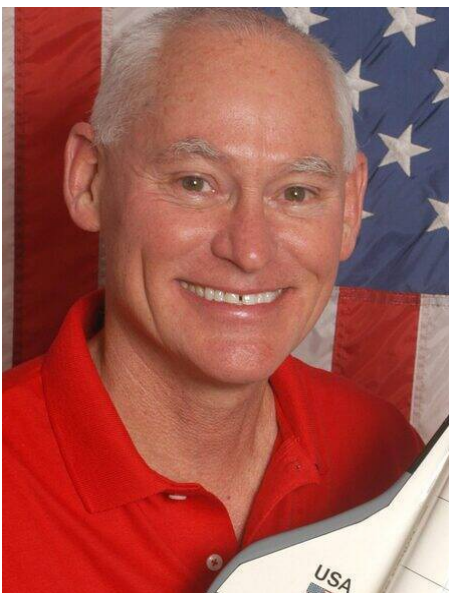
Mullane uses the Challenger tragedy to make this point. Under tremendous schedule and budget pressures and over multiple launches, the NASA team accepted a lower standard of performance on the solid rocket booster O-rings until that lower standard became the "norm". By the dawn of Challenger, the NASA team had become so comfortable with seeing occasional O-ring damage and getting away with it, the original standard, in which ANY O-ring damage was defined as intolerable deviance, was marginalized. Disaster resulted.

The Columbia tragedy is another example of normalization of deviance and Mullane discusses the salient issue of that tragedy that the NASA team grew so comfortable accepting occasional "hits" on the winged-orbiter by foam shedding from the gas tank, they lost sight of the criticality of the deviance.

Teams maintain their high standards of performance by "planning the work and working the plan"; connecting the dots (to insure multiple problems aren't just symptoms of a single normalization of deviance problem); and by considering the instincts of team members in the decision making process. With Challenger, some engineers had a gut feeling that an O-ring disaster loomed, but management refused to react to instincts. Leaders should investigate instinctual fears to determine if, in fact, they are rooted in reality.

Colonel Mullane was born September 10, 1945 in Wichita Falls, Texas but spent much of his youth in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he currently resides. Upon his graduation from West Point in 1967, he was commissioned in the United States Air Force. As a Weapon Systems Operator aboard RF-4C Phantom aircraft, he completed 134 combat missions in Vietnam. He holds a Master's of Science Degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology and is also a graduate of the Air Force Flight Test Engineer School at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

Mullane was selected as a Mission Specialist in 1978 in the first group of Space Shuttle Astronauts. He completed three space missions aboard the Shuttles Discovery (STS-41D) and Atlantis (STS-27 & 36) before retiring from NASA and the Air Force in 1990.



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Economic Outlook for the Years Ahead, Economist Connor Lokar, Institute for Trend Research

This presentation will review short and long term economic forecasts and how these will directly impact the construction industry, economic insight into inflation, interest rates and taxes, a look at the current events of the day and how to expect them to impact construction now and into the future, as well as, instruction for how to move forward. Too, this will be our opportunity to catch up with ITR on the projections of a great recession coming in the decade of the 2030's.

Few economists present their insights with the authority, accuracy, and humor that Connor Lokar brings to the stage. From the intimate executive retreat to the standing room-only keynote, he delivers practical economic intelligence with charm and candor.

Connor has been giving economic keynotes, workshops, and webinars across North America since he joined ITR Economics in 2014. With his quick wit and knack for storytelling, he successfully educates his audiences while simultaneously captivating them. Thousands of business leaders have enjoyed his dynamic approach; Connor emphasizes the applicability of economic intelligence and calls his audience to action.



When not on stage, Connor contributes his economic expertise in the role of trusted advisor, consulting directly with management teams of firms large and small. ITR's clients meet with Connor at critical planning junctures to ensure that their strategic plans, goals, and internal initiatives are in alignment with their tailored forecasts. As ITR Economics' senior forecaster, Connor has a particularly keen understanding of how forecasts are derived. The resulting insights enable clients to make the most of their economic outlooks.

Connor specializes in construction and industrial markets but consults and presents to businesses across all industries, helping them grow revenue and remain profitable through an ever changing business cycle. He has been featured in articles from AMT Online, NTD, and The Epoch Times.

Texas Legislation Session Report / Texas Construction Law Trends / Ask the Attorney Ben Westcott and Adam Robertson, Andrews Myers, P.C.



Ben Westcott is Co-Managing Shareholder of Andrews Myers, PC. The firm is recognized widely as one of Texas' preeminent construction law firms. Adam Robertson, Shareholder, will join him, and together they will address the recently concluded 87th Texas Legislative Session. Many pieces of legislation were considered and several will have been finally passed that will affect the way we do our business in the Construction industry in Texas. As well, as time will allow the will discuss recent trends in construction law that impact the specialty contractor in Texas. If you have a specific issue question please prepare it in writing in advance of this program so that they might address it during this portion of their presentation.



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MCAA Executive Director of Safety, Health and Risk Management Raffi Elchemmas

MCAA is celebrating more than 20 years of safety excellence in 2025. Over this period of time, MCAA has helped our members protect workers from workplace hazards and make themselves more competitive in the mechanical construction and service industries. Since kicking off this focus area, MCAA has developed more than 700 safety and health resources, helping to prevent over 450,000 injuries and saving more than 17 billion dollars. Resources and services include:

- Mechanical Industry-Specific Safety and Health Resources
- Annual Safety Conference
- Safety & Health Awards
- Regulatory & Legislative Advocacy
- Direct Contractor Consulting



Raffi Elchemmas is a dedicated safety and health professional with a strong commitment to enhancing safety standards across the construction industry. He joined the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) in 2021 to support the organization's Safety Excellence Initiative. In his role, Raffi works to advance MCAA's safety initiatives, aiming to improve the overall health and well-being of workers in the mechanical contracting industry.

With certifications as an OSHA Authorized Construction Trainer, Certified Safety Professional (CSP), and Construction Health & Safety Technician (CHST), Raffi has extensive expertise in safety management. He is also board certified in professional ergonomics, bringing a holistic approach to workplace safety.

Before joining MCAA, Raffi served as the National Manager for Health & Safety at MILWAUKEE TOOL, an MCAA member company. Prior to that, he was the Ergonomics and Product Safety Manager at Greenlee, an MCAA member company.

Roundtable Discussion

Following breakfast we will have an open discussion of best practices among our member firms around the topics of Building Information Modeling (BIM) and the adoption and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in mechanical construction and service project management.

Project/Service Managers Education Series for 2025

Leveraging Strengths to Achieve Goals

This program is available from MCAA through their National Education Initiative (NEI) PROJECT MANAGER LEADERSHIP SERIES (PML). The Mechanical Industry's best Project Managers focus on skills that go beyond budgets and schedules. Top tier Project Managers know that our industry is people driven. In this program you will:

- Learn how to set actionable and achievable goals that are motivating and drive performance.
- Own your individual strengths and apply them strategically to achieve your goals.
- Know how to leverage the strengths of those around you to accomplish team and project goals.
- Required Strengths Finders Assessment

Leah Gutmann, owner of First Forward Consulting, LLC, specializes in a wide variety of training, program development, and consulting services. Leah is certified to deliver training on a wide variety of leadership and financial topics with a focus on the direct



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application of skills and abilities unique to the mechanical construction industry. She has over 12 years of experience in the design, implementation and facilitation of educational programs, classes and seminars.

Her 20-year career as a CFO and Finance Manager in the mechanical construction industry has given Leah the unique ability to offer training and consulting from a hands-on, in the trenches perspective. She has been an integral part of building complete educational programs and specialized industry classes from the inception phase all the way through delivery.

In addition to the MCA Western Washington, a few of Leah's clients include Microsoft, the MCA of Kansas City, the Colorado Association of Mechanical and Plumbing Contractors, MacDonald-Miller Facility Solutions, The Seattle Pipe Trades, Hermanson Company, Dawson Construction, Colorado UA Local 58, and Lexington Plumbing. Being at the forefront in Instructor Training and Design, Leah has helped her clients create and deliver training that is engaging, relevant and impactful to their organizations.

MCA Texas Golf Tournament

Our location for the 2025 Tournament is the Omni Barton Creek Resort Fazio Foothills Course, the resort's signature track and most dramatic course. Fazio Foothills offers elevated tee boxes and a thrilling ride down to the fairways and greens, protected by cliffs, creeks, waterfalls and wildlife.

We'll begin the Tournament with a shotgun start at 8:00 am on Saturday, July 27th. Your entry fee will include breakfast, all golf course fees, all on course food & non-alcohol beverages and lunch upon conclusion of the tournament. We will award prizes in the form of Gift Cards to each of the First, Second and Third place teams, and to the several Closest-to-the-Pin contest winners. There will be a limit of one award per participant.

The logo for Omni Resorts Barton Creek, featuring the word "OMNI" in a serif font, a small circular emblem with a stylized "R" inside, and the word "RESORTS" in a serif font, with "barton creek" in a smaller, lowercase sans-serif font below it.

2025 Annual Meeting Featured Entertainer



Cory Morrow didn't become a Texas legend by being quiet. He sings about strippers and Jesus with equal fervor. While this dichotomy may leave those on either side of the moral equator perplexed – the answer is actually very simple. Cory Morrow is beautifully and uncomfortably transparent. From the beer soaked, cocaine laden days of his early career, to today's more sober and spiritual leg of the journey, one thing about Morrow has never changed – as goes Cory's life, goes Cory's songs – and that's never been more evident than on his newest studio release "Whiskey & Pride".

Cory Morrow is a Texas Country singer-songwriter, who has gained popularity throughout the Southwest.

From Houston, he started playing guitar at Memorial High School, and continued to develop as a musician while attending Texas Tech.



In 1993, Morrow moved to Austin, Texas, to pursue music as a career. He is also considered part of the Red Dirt music scene, that differentiates itself from the popular Nashville music scene. Morrow has sold over 200,000 albums independently. Morrow's 2002 release *Outside the Lines* reached No. 28 on Billboard's Country Album chart, No. 3 on the magazine's Internet Sales chart, No. 8 on its Independent Album chart and No. 16 on Heatseekers chart. SoundScan ranked him No. 7 among "country debut artists" that year.