

A WALK THROUGH TAMPA WITH THE BAR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Bar Leadership Institute

Chairs: Alberto “Tito” Gonzalez – Imler Law; Haneen Kantar – Ferrentino + Brotz; Zane W. Katz – Trenam, et al. & Kimberly – Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP



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The Hillsborough County Bar Association’s Bar Leadership Institute (BLI) Class of 2024-2025 had a fantastic Fall! The Class kicked off the year with a reception where we met and found out what BLI had in store for us.

Our first two Modules involved what I now consider “must do” tours for anyone in Tampa. First, the BLI Class visited J.C. Newman

Cigar Company. Located in Ybor City in “El Reloj,” J.C. Newman has operated for well over a century and is the last of Tampa’s original cigar factories still in operation. We met with Drew Newman, who told us about his background (he’s the first in his family to attend law school) and his family’s history in the cigar industry. Then came the tour where we got to see and hear about the Company’s history and

current operations. We saw the factory’s Master Hand Rollers and the antique, hand-operated cigar machines at work, providing a peek into a unique and important part of Tampa’s history.

In November, we went to the historic Tampa Theatre for another walk through Tampa history. We learned about the movie palace

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The Bar Leadership Institute class visiting the Port of Tampa in January.

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and its unique John Ebersson architecture. We then met with the Theatre's President and CEO, John Bell, and a representative of the City Attorney's Office and learned more about the Theatre's operations (it hosts nearly 1,000 events a year) and the interesting relationship between the City of Tampa, which rescued the Theatre when it faced closure and demolition in the 1970s, and the not-for-profit Tampa Theatre Inc. that manages it.

For December, we went "behind-the-scenes" at America's Favorite Airport, Tampa International Airport (TPA). During our tour we got to see the incredible infrastructure TPA has established to ensure that luggage

makes it from the check-in counter to the airlines. After our tour, we met with TPA's current General Counsel and Executive Vice President, and incoming CEO, Michael Stephens. Learning about his background, his views on leadership, and his vision for the future of TPA was inspiring. His energy is infectious and listening to him talk about the importance of unity, connection, resilience, and innovation made us all excited to see what's to come at TPA.

BLI is an opportunity to learn so much about different Tampa organizations — including their history, leadership, and impact on our community. So far, BLI has been incredible, and we have many exciting Modules in the next few months. We'll be visiting the Port of Tampa, the Tampa Bay

Buccaneers, the Tampa Fire/Tampa Police Department Training Facility, and MacDill Air Force Base, but what I'm personally most excited for is seeing what our BLI Class puts together for our community service project, and how this BLI Class comes together to impact our community! ■



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The Bar Leadership Institute class visiting Tampa International Airport in December.