

It's All There

By Brett Levanto, Vice President of Operations, Aeronautical Repair Station Association



In March, ARSA hosted its 2026 Annual Conference. The association proudly claims the four days of regulatory content and legislative advocacy paired with collegial engagement among and between the industry's most engaged quality professionals to be the aerospace maintenance community's premier substantive event.

The event provides a thorough overview of the current aerospace technical needs. For anyone with interest in international aviation safety regulation, it's all there.

In his pre-Conference message to ARSA membership, association president John Riggs called the state of the association address regularly given during the end-of-week member meeting "perfunctory."

"Anyone applying critical thinking during the member breakfast will realize that the 'president's address' contains a recitation of the same topics and details covered during the previous three days of the Conference," Riggs said in the February edition of the members-only hotline newsletter. "Taking a step back, members should realize that those days of focused, useful discussion are a continuation of the daily work by ARSA's team reported in its communications."

Reviewing what happened on each of "those days" shows where the industry has been over the past year and where it is going.

Executive-to-Executive Briefings – March 17

The first and smallest day of the Conference brings in handpicked participants from sponsoring organizations for a series of high-level, closed-door meetings. The day's agenda takes focus away from the FAA to engage other areas impacting aerospace business. This year's "E2E" heavily centered on trade and supply chain issues. A briefing on tariff impacts (and refund options) and a visit from the office of the U.S. Trade Representative highlighted the day, with an economic briefing from ARSA partner Oliver Wyman Vector bringing home both business and workforce issues.

Legislative Day – March 18

What was once a day reserved for a golf tournament has become a staple of the annual event. Dozens of maintenance professionals catch up on key policy issues before putting a personal face on their industry's story before their members of Congress. The association's priorities are to fully invest in career development programs while addressing resonating problems from the legislator's prior reauthorizations of

the FAA. The message to Capitol Hill is that 300,000 maintenance technicians need consistent resources and reliable oversight to continue supporting the world fleet.

Annual Repair Symposium – March 19

The "around the world" nature of ARSA's work was evident as civil aviation authorities from three continents took center stage. After general updates participants engaged in new maintenance organization mandates and the long-term bilateral interests of the FAA, the U.K. CAA, ANAC Brazil, and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency. Major issues like Safety Management Systems integration and the expansion of unnecessary drug and alcohol testing program requirements globally attracted considerable attention. There was also time for reports on rulemaking priorities like reciprocal acceptance and the elimination of the "current data burden" placed on repair stations. A wrap-up on career development returned focus to the needs of individuals required by the rules to perform maintenance.

Member Meeting and Breakouts – March 20

ARSA president Riggs handed the member meeting reins to the ARSA team. The recap session highlighted the association's service to the industry and actions to be taken by its members'. A pair of concluding breakout sessions covered the major SMS and D&A issues in a practical and direct manner; each provided a chance for instruction to participants as well as learning by ARSA's team (with agency personnel sitting in on the drug and alcohol session to gather information for continuing guidance development).

Overall, the 2026 Annual Conference showcased ARSA's leadership and its members engagement. Between the event's four days and the continual communications from the association's team — internal and external — there is no compliance or advocacy matter of interest to international maintenance providers not covered. No matter where you're looking for support, it really is all there.

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