



ACE Conference 2026 in USA

WASHINGTON, DC - April 20-23
AUSTIN, TX- April 24-25

The 2026 **Annual AmChams in Europe (ACE)** Conference, held across Washington, DC and Austin, offered a dense and strategically valuable program that underscored the evolving role of transatlantic business in a volatile geopolitical and economic climate. Spanning high-level government meetings, think tank discussions, and private-sector engagements, the conference delivered both insight and access.

US Chamber of Commerce Annual Briefing 2026



Meeting Participants:

- **John Murphy, Trade & Economy**
- **Christopher Guith on Cyber Security, NATO mood, defence procurement**
- **David Smentek (Politics), Senior Director of Government Affairs**
- **Gary Litman (Global Initiatives) B20 USA 2026 The Official Business Forum for the CEOs**
- **Lesly Henderson Rubio, Director Americas - Rule of Law in Business Dashboard**

From the outset at the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, the tone was set with a strong emphasis on trade and economic recalibration. **John Murphy** provided a pragmatic overview of U.S. trade policy, particularly the strategic use of tariffs as a corrective tool for long-standing trade imbalances. While the ambition to reverse the global trade deficit is politically resonant, the discussion revealed the tension between protectionist measures and the need to sustain open transatlantic markets. His three takeaways—strengthening trade ties, maintaining pro-business policy focus, and serving as a stabilizing voice—felt less like new insights and more like a necessary reaffirmation of AmChams' core mission.

Security and defense emerged as a parallel theme. **Christopher Guith** highlighted the growing intersection between NATO priorities and business interests, particularly in cybersecurity and procurement. The message was clear: increased defense spending is no longer hypothetical but inevitable, and U.S. companies are positioning themselves—and their European partners—to engage more deeply with NATO frameworks.

Political uncertainty also loomed large. **David Smentek** pointed to the likelihood of a Democratic shift in Congress and a more assertive executive branch regardless of electoral outcomes. This reinforces a broader sense that businesses must prepare for policy volatility rather than clarity—hardly reassuring, but realistic.

A more forward-looking dimension came from **Gary Litman**, who introduced the B20 USA 2026 initiative. Framed around economic growth, innovation, trade, and energy, it positions AmChams as conduits for globally ambitious companies to engage at the highest levels. This was one of the more actionable segments, offering a tangible pathway for member organizations to elevate their influence.

Equally notable was the launch of the Rule of Law in Business Dashboard, led by **Lesly Henderson Rubio**. Designed as a hybrid, regionally adaptable tool, it aims to quantify and communicate legal and regulatory environments. While in rollout phase, it signals a shift toward data-driven advocacy—something AmChams have long needed.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS:



US Department of Commerce Meeting

Meeting with **David Fogel**, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service Global Markets

US Department of State Meeting

1. **Michael Rigas**, Deputy Secretary of State Management and Resources
2. **Courtney Austrian**, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
3. **Tsering Dhnghog**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Trade Policy and Negotiations
4. **Michael Vaccaro**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Defense Trade Controls



CAPITOL HILL:

Meeting with Congressman Keith Self, Chairman of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs on Europe



The series of government meetings, including engagements at the United States Department of State and United States Department of Commerce, provided valuable direct dialogue with policymakers. Discussions ranged from trade negotiations to defense export controls, reflecting the breadth of issues impacting transatlantic business. A session with Keith Self added a legislative perspective, though it largely echoed earlier themes of uncertainty and strategic competition.

THINK TANKS:



- **Meeting at the Center of Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)**

- **Visit to Accenture** and meeting with Andrew J.P.Levy, Chief Corporate and Government Affairs



- **Visit to Politico** and briefing with Alon Naor, VP of Corporate Development and Strategic Partnerships,; Joe Schatz, Deputy Editor in Chief; Julia Marsh, Executive Editor, Washington; Daniel Desrochers, International Trade Reporter

The visit to the **Center for Strategic and International Studies** added analytical depth, complementing the policy-heavy agenda with broader geopolitical framing. Meanwhile, corporate visits to **Accenture** and **Politico** offered a useful reminder of how policy narratives are interpreted and operationalized in both business strategy and media.

AUSTIN, TEXAS





- **Tour of the Tesla Gigafactory**
- **Visit to the University of Texas in Austin** and meeting with Dr. Sonia Feigenbaum, Senior VP Provost for Global Engagement and Chief International Office
- **US Trade Consult Briefing**
- **Austin Chamber of Commerce meeting**
 - Jeremy Martin, President & CEO
 - Mike Kamerlander, President and CEO, Hays Caldwell Economic Development Partnership
 - Jami Haney, VP, Bastrop Chamber of Commerce
 - Dori Kelley, Economic Development Professional- Bastrop Country
 - Corey Rose, Vice President, Global Investment & Innovation, Opportunity Austin
- **Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office**
 - Meeting with Terry Zrubek, Deputy Executive Director



The shift to Texas introduced a different but equally important perspective: regional economic dynamism. The tour of the **Tesla Gigafactory Texas** showcased industrial scale and innovation, while the visit to the **University of Texas at Austin** emphasized the role of academia in global engagement. Meetings with the **Austin Chamber of Commerce** and regional development leaders highlighted how local ecosystems are driving international investment and innovation in ways that complement federal policy.

The 2026 ACE Conference was attended by **37 AmCham Executives** from **30 European countries**. It was a truly valuable and insightful week reinforcing the importance of collaboration, continuity, and strong transatlantic ties.

