



Rob Gifford

President

National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF)

Rob Gifford is President of the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF). The Foundation and its programs work to Attract, Empower and Advance today's and tomorrow's restaurant and foodservice industry workforce.

Under Gifford's leadership, the Foundation has expanded its mission to support the nation's restaurant workers and create job and career opportunities for people of all backgrounds. In February 2021, Gifford was recognized by *Nation's Restaurant News the Power List: Reader's Picks*, as one of "The Most Influential Solutions Providers and Operators in the Country." The NRAEF was also awarded a *Power of "A" Gold Award* from the *American Society of Association Executives* for its mission to "Create a Competitive Workforce."

Recent Foundation initiatives include the Restaurant Employee Relief Fund in March 2020, raising over \$21.5 million to help restaurant workers facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. Gifford also spearheaded the first-ever restaurant manager apprenticeship program for the U.S. Department of Labor and Restaurant Ready, a partnership with community-based organizations dedicated to teaching job and life skills to underserved populations. Other NRAEF programs include:

- **ProStart** – a two-year pre-apprenticeship program offered at 1,700 high schools teaching 140,000 students essential skills in culinary arts and restaurant management
- **Military** – a training and recognition program helping military servicemen and women across all branches transition their skills to restaurant and foodservice jobs and careers
- **Scholarships and Grants** – awarding annual financial assistance to anyone pursuing education and technical training in restaurants, foodservice and hospitality
- **HOPES** - building pathways to independence for justice-involved youth through job skills training and mentoring

Gifford's career spans more than 25 years of advocacy and public policy experience. Before joining the National Restaurant Association and the NRAEF, Gifford served as the President and CEO of the Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA). During his tenure, MRA was voted one of

the five most effective association-lobbying organizations in Michigan, and Gifford was presented with the MRA's Vision and Leadership Award. Gifford began his career working in the United States Senate, where he served for seven years on the staff of Senator Robert W. Kasten (R-Wi).

A graduate of the University of Maryland, Gifford has served as Chairman of the International Society of Restaurant Association Executives (ISRAE), as an officer on the Council of State Restaurant Associations (CSRA), and on the Boards of the National Restaurant Association, National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Society of Association Executives.

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