

NATO Tech Advisor Jerry Pierce Resigns Amid Staff Shake-Up (Exclusive)

The technology veteran left the National Association of Theatre Owners in protest over the exit of exec vp and general counsel Jackie Brenneman.

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Plus Icon

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ALAIN BENAINOUS/GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES

The National Association of Theatre Owners has lost another team member following Friday's exit of exec vp and general counsel Jackie Brenneman, who sources say was ousted.

Now, *The Hollywood Reporter* has learned that Jerry Pierce, who has served as NATO's technical advisor since 2012, resigned in protest on Monday.

The continuing shakeup occurs just a few short months after the departure of NATO chief John Fithian, who left his role in late April after more than three decades with the association. His successor, Michael O'Leary, took the reins as the head of NATO on May 1. Then in late June, NATO vice president and chief communications officer Patrick Corcoran left his role after a 24-year run.

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THR obtained a copy of Pierce's resignation letter, in which he states: "The selection and subsequent leadership of NATO by Michael O'Leary is my primary motivation to resign. ... I have been very disappointed in his lack of interest and disrespect for the knowledge and experience of his staff."

He adds, "I am also concerned that NATO seems to be moving away from Hollywood. I hope this is not being contemplated since all the efforts for technology and many critical topics for exhibition are focused in Hollywood."

The letter does not elaborate on what Pierce means by fears that NATO would move away from Hollywood.

Of Brenneman's ouster, the letter reads, "Michael O'Leary's removal of Jackie Brenneman, one of the most dedicated, hardworking and insightful members of the NATO team, was the confirmation of Michael's lack of understanding of the complexities of the NATO ecosystem. I do not understand the logic behind the removal of such an important contributor to the exhibition industry."

NATO declined to comment for this story.

Brenneman, who was among the candidates to replace Fithian before the job was offered to O'Leary, joined NATO in 2014, first as counsel and director of industry relations.

Earlier, she was general counsel to the Global Cinema Federation.

A Hollywood tech insider, Pierce is a former senior vp at Universal who was among the Hollywood leaders who helped guide the transition from film to digital cinema projection. He remains chairman of the Inter-Society Digital Cinema Forum, an organization that he helped form in 2006 to support the launch of digital cinema. NATO is among the sponsoring organizations of ISDCF.

On Monday, The Cinema Foundation announced the second National Cinema Day will be held on Aug. 27, highlighting the role of movies and offering discounted admissions at participating U.S. theaters in all formats, which will be no more than \$4.

In an ironic sense of timing, National Cinema Day's champion was Brenneman, who also served as president of the Cinema Foundation, a sister non-profit to NATO. Said Brenneman in a statement Monday: "We look forward to gathering at the movies and celebrating."