

San Francisco: Major Convention Cancels Due to Homeless Problems of Drugs, Behavior and Feces

written by GEG | July 4, 2018



Tourism is San Francisco's biggest industry, bringing in \$9 billion a year, employing 80,000 people and generating more than \$725 million in local taxes. A major convention canceled future plans due to open drug use, threatening behavior, and mental illness that are common on the streets. Last week, more than 16,000 complaints of human feces littering the streets were logged with the city. Needles and garbage near homeless encampments also add to the problem.

In a move that is alarming San Francisco's biggest industry, a major medical association is pulling its annual convention out of the city – saying its members no longer feel safe.

"It's the first time that we have had an out-and-out cancellation over the issue, and this is a group that has been coming here every three or four years since the 1980s," said Joe D'Alessandro, president and CEO of S.F. Travel, the city's convention bureau.

D'Alessandro declined to name the medical association, saying the bureau still hopes to bring the group back in the future.

As a rule, major conventions book their visits at least five years in advance. So when D'Alessandro and members of the hospitality industry hadn't heard from the doctors about re-upping, they flew to the organization's Chicago headquarters for a face-to-face meeting with its executive board.

A non-profit group is trying to raise \$100 million to help solve the city's homeless crisis. Tara Moriarty reports.

Media: JW Player

And with good reason: The group's annual five-day trade show draws 15,000 attendees and pumps about \$40 million into the local economy.

"They said that they are committed to this year and to 2023, but nothing in between or nothing thereafter," D'Alessandro said. "After that, they told us they are planning to go elsewhere – I believe it's Los Angeles."

Joe D'Alessandro, President & CEO of the San Francisco Travel, in his office at the group's headquarters in San Francisco, Calif., on Wednesday, April 4, 2018. It's not just hotel owners who are getting the brunt of tourists' complaints about how disgusting San Francisco's streets have become. It's also S.F. Travel, the city's visitor bureau that's in charge of promoting the city and bringing conventions and conferences here. Increasingly, their clients are fed up and threatening to scratch SF off the convention circuit.

The doctors group told the San Francisco delegation that while they loved the city, postconvention surveys showed their members were afraid to walk amid the open drug use, threatening behavior and mental illness that are common on the streets.

It didn't help that one board member had been assaulted near Moscone Center last year.

[Read full article here...](#)

[Additional article on waste in the streets...](#)