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## Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce Signs Landmark Agreement with Panamanian Business Group

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**TAMPA, Fla.** — Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick LLP attorney **Ronald A. Christaldi** last month joined dozens of influential business leaders from the Tampa area and the nation of Panama for a historic series of meetings that resulted in a landmark agreement between the two groups. That cooperative agreement, signed by the **Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce**, where Christaldi serves as chair, and the **American Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Panama**, strengthens economic ties between Tampa Bay and Panama just as the ambitious plan to double the Panama Canal's capacity nears completion.

The Panama delegation that visited Tampa in early May included 34 business and government ministers, with 13 participating companies that conducted more than 50 meetings with Tampa businesses each day they were here. The Tampa Chamber worked with both the Tampa Bay Trade & Protocol Council, an international organization within the Tampa Chamber that promotes the region around the world, as well as Enterprise Florida, to host the representatives from Panama.

To formalize the relationship between the two regions, the Tampa Chamber and the American Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Panama signed an agreement in which both organizations pledged to strengthen their business ties. The agreement was the first of its kind for the Tampa Chamber.

"By signing this agreement, we're promising to foster closer relationships on both sides of the Gulf of Mexico and to drive commerce between the two areas," Christaldi says. "With the dramatic expansion of the Panama Canal about to become a reality, Panama will become the indisputable hub for shipping commerce

in this hemisphere, and Tampa Bay is well-positioned to take advantage of that increased capacity.”

The Panama agreement is just one of several international projects Christaldi, Shumaker and the Tampa Chamber are involved in. Last December, Christaldi traveled to Santiago, Chile, with Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn, St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman and others to discuss international trade. And in May, Christaldi and a delegation from the Tampa Chamber visited Havana, hoping to develop ties with the country as America softens its policies there.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has also signed an agreement to promote Tampa in India, and this September, representatives from the Tampa Chamber will travel with Mayor Buckhorn to Ireland to ink an agreement like the Panama one with the South Dublin Chamber.

“We want Tampa to be known as a global player,” says Christaldi, whose practice areas at Shumaker include corporate law and commercial litigation. “Agreements like the one we signed with Panama make it very clear to everyone around the world that we’re open for business.”

### **About Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP?**

Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP is a full-service business law firm with more than 240 lawyers, 60 paralegals and 495 employees in five offices: Toledo and Columbus, Ohio; Tampa and Sarasota, Florida; and Charlotte, North Carolina. In each of its markets, Shumaker is the premier provider of quality legal services to individuals, small businesses, health care providers, nonprofits and Fortune 500 and international corporations.