

Susan Neely

Former Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; President and CEO of American Beverage Association

Over a career that spans more than 30 years, Susan Neely has served as strategist and counsel to national and state leaders ranging from the President of the United States and a cabinet secretary to the longest serving governor in America's history and CEOs of Fortune 50 companies. One of the architects of the nation's first Department of Homeland Security, she has been at the heart of policy and politics regarding the security and protection of the United States from the beginning. In her current position as CEO of the American Beverage Association, she helps the \$140 billion non-alcoholic beverage industry navigate the complex obesity crisis and take the lead on creating solutions. She is routinely named one of the top association CEOs in Washington, DC and recognized as an expert on risk and crisis communications, adroit message development, and navigating the smart path forward through the stormiest of seas. Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities, Inc. speakers bureau](#), Neely is an engaging presenter who speaks with authority on issues from the perspective of a Washington insider.

In the Circle of Trust. Neely talks about being a member of Secretary Ridge's inner circle from the White House to the new department. She describes playing a key part in the decision-making that led to new security measures that the public participates in every day, whether at airports, major bridges, tunnels, ports, chemical sites, National Parks, highways, or train stations. She articulates how she shaped the policy of threat warnings, national preparedness and response, visa issuance, privacy rights, and information sharing. Audiences get a first-hand account of what it is like to be special assistant to the president for Homeland Security in the White House and then assistant secretary for public affairs in the department – and the gravity of being responsible for the public face of the homeland security. She discusses the management of everything from threat announcements, to branding, to public education campaigns, to crisis communications.

Leader in Communication. Neely has 25 years of experience in senior communications and management positions in the public and private sector. At the American Beverage Association, she provides leadership and expertise in health policy and communications. She has also held leadership positions on the staffs of Governor Terry Branstad, Congressman Sid Morrison, and Congressman Jim Leach. She advised and ran Governor Branstad's successful campaign after the bottom dropped out of the farm market in the 80s and 38 banks were closed in his first term. Neely also served as an executive at the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Health Insurance Association of America. She created and managed numerous issue-campaigns, including the award winning "Harry and Louise" television commercials. Neely also founded a Washington, DC, office for the advertising and public relations firm of CMF&Z, then the largest agriculture communications agency in the country and a subsidiary of Young & Rubicam.

Neely was elected the first woman president of the 90-year-old Washington Rotary Club, and the first woman president of the 100-year-old University Club of Washington, DC. She served as chair-elect of the Public Affairs Council. Susan received the 2002 Trailblazer Award from Dialogue on Diversity and the 2003 Drake Alumni Achievement Award.