



Contact: Jim Beach, WMMA, 608-834-9951, jbeach@wmma.org

Release: 3/28/11

WMMA and WMIA March on Capitol Hill

In February, 12 WMMA and 4 WMIA members went to DC to visit with their representatives to discuss existing and pending legislation and regulations directly affecting their bottom line. Together they met with 29 Congressmen, Senators and/or their staffs on issues ranging from needed business tax reform; enacting the Manufacturing Reinvestment Account legislation; increasing and making permanent direct expensing; pending OSHA industrial wood dust limits; enacting a simpler Research and Development tax credit for small business; retraction of the law dictating increased need for Form 1099's and; maintaining the bonus depreciation.

Each participant was armed with background papers and their own unique story to tell. For those interested in learning more about the above issues from the WMMA perspective please contact Harold Zassenhaus, WMMA, 301 652 0693, hzassenhaus@wmma.org for copies of the "one pagers" outlining the issues and how it affects the small woodworking concern.

The event kicked off with a dinner at which U.S. Department of Commerce Deputy Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing, Peter Perez addressed the group and answered questions regarding the administration's priorities for the manufacturing sector. Top on the list were job creation and increasing U.S. exports. DAS Perez has been active in Obama's National Export Initiative and has been touring the U.S. touting the resources available to assist U.S. manufacturers interested in exporting.



Sen. Harry Reid (NV); John Henderson (WMIA); Sen. John Ensign, (NV)

After a breakfast briefing from John Satagaj, WMMA National Affairs counsel, participants made their way to the Hill for their appointments. Satagaj reminded all of why the timing of the event was excellent. "The 112th Congress has an extraordinarily large freshman class and with a change in the majority in the House, it is an exceptionally great opportunity to get in on the ground floor before the Members of Congress become wise to the ways of Washington.

'With a Republican majority in the House, it was a great time to identify new champions for causes of interest to us like tort reform and reasonable regulations. At the same time, it was an opportunity to convince Democrat members to be receptive to new compromises. With a Democratic majority in the Senate and a Democrat in the White House, it is important to reach out to everybody.

'WMMA has demonstrated time and time again, that you do not have to be the biggest player on the block to be effective. Persistence and credibility go a long way with Members of Congress. If they and their staffs can put a face to the local job created, it helps a lot. The Fly-in bridges the gap. But, it is not the only way one can accomplish that task. Getting a Representative or Senator to visit your operation and see what it means to the local economy, makes you more than an email address to them."

Headway was made on the Manufacturing Reinvestment Accountant (MRA). Frank Kobilsek, Black Bros. and chair of the WMMA Public Policy Committee, Jamie Scott of Air Handling Systems and Laurel Didier, Vance Publishing, met with Rep. Manzullo (R-IL), a co-sponsor MRA legislation. He not only was glad to see the manufacturing community had endorsed the concept but urged others to come to the Hill, meet with their reps and convince them to sign on. "This is an exciting time for member involvement. If you can't get to the Hill, solicit your Congressperson when he/she is in state to meet with you, preferably at your plant," said Kobilsek.

On the Senate side Jamison Scott met with Sen. Blumenthal's (D-CT) staff. The Senator was convinced of the MRA merits and will be drafting a compatible bill to introduce MRA legislation. "We really have a unique opportunity to support USA manufacturing" said Scott. "Republicans, Democrats and the Administration are pushing USA jobs and USA manufacturing. Now is the time to engage your representatives."

On another issue, Mark Craig of Giben and a WMIA member was pleased with his visits. He met with newly elected Rep. Woodall (R-GA) and the staff of Senator Chambliss (R-GA) and their response to his questions on direct expensing were positive. "While direct expensing is safe until 2012, they assured me," he said, "that it will be an important topic by next year and will be a high priority to extend it." Regarding the MRA, it was something the Senator from GA was not familiar with. His office found the concept very interesting and the office claimed it could be something it would support.

Mark Chappell, President, WMMA and long time participant in the DC Fly-Ins summed it up. "The Woodworking Industry Public Policy Fly-In is a once a year event when all of us in the industry approach our representatives on the Hill with issues near and dear to our businesses. But don't rely totally on the Fly-in. There is work to do in your community. Ask your representatives to your plant. Let them appreciate the work being done in the USA and ask for their legislative support on issues of importance to you."