

Hardwood Federation Update

By Dana Lee Cole

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In an increasingly polarizing political environment, it is vital that our representatives in Washington hear our hardwood message and understand how existing and proposed federal policies impact our industry. Contributing significantly to that end is the Hardwood Federation (HF) Fall Fly-in - our most important and widely anticipated event of the year.

The Fly-In brings hardwood industry leaders to Washington to share their stories and relate the industry's message directly to the Members of Congress who draft and vote on legislation important to our industry. And I'm pleased to report that this year, nearly 60 hardwood representatives from across the U.S. – our largest attendance in recent memory - made the trip to Washington. The Hardwood Manufacturers Association was very well represented by membership and staff. And overall, participation was a great mix of knowledgeable, Fly-In veterans and eager new faces.

We were busy!

To make a real difference, on Wednesday, September 13, we stormed the Hill in small groups and visited as many congressional offices as possible! At the end of the day, sixty-four (**64**) meetings were held with members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Thirty-five (**35**) more meetings were held with those in the U.S. Senate. That's more than 1/3 of the total in the Upper Chamber. We also were able to visit with a number of members during our Hardwood Federation PAC reception and breakfast. [What priority issues did we address?](#)

- **Federal Forestry Reform** – H.R. 2647, the “Resilient Federal *Forests* Act of 2017” from the only Forester in Congress, Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR), has been re-introduced in the House and continues to address badly needed reform to federal land management, while also considering concerns regarding forest fire funding which currently consumes over 50% of the US Forest Service budget
- **Tax Reform** – HF supports a Federal tax system that maintains a healthy economic environment for small, medium, and large companies, as well as family owned and operated businesses. Reform of the tax code should include S-Corp. benefits – including protecting assets, pass-through taxation, straightforward ownership transfer, employee stock ownership

plans and heightened credibility, a lowered or erased estate tax, and tax structures that benefit forest land owners

- **Sawmill Residuals** – HF supports the Biomass Thermal Utilization Act (H.R. 3161 and S. 1480) which qualifies high efficient biomass heating systems for the same investment tax credits (30% of install cost) as other renewables. HF also supports the Community Wood Energy Program (CWEP) included in the Farm Bill – and advocating for mandatory funding in the 2018 Farm Bill, which provided grants to projects installing wood heating systems in schools, hospitals, community centers, and whole towns
- **Tall Wood Buildings** – HF Supports the Timber Innovation Act (TIA) (H.R. 1380 and S. 538) which helps develop new markets for wood products using Cross Laminated Timber (CLT)
- **MAP and FMD** – HF strongly supports full funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) programs as authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and full funding going forward, including in the 2018 reauthorization of the Farm Bill

Other activities

During the Opening Reception at the Marriott Marquis, we heard from Senator John Tester (D-MT), a generational family farmer and music teacher. As a man of similar agricultural and manufacturing interests, he not only understands the hard work of our industry, but has seen first-hand the devastation of the catastrophic wildfires increasingly affecting the West, and just the week prior was on his ranch surrounded by smoke.

Following the Wednesday reception, Congressman Tom McClintock (R-CA, 4), Chairman of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands, spoke to the group during dinner. He gave an impassioned speech on the need for better Federal Forest Management as he has also seen first-hand the effects of wildfire in the West as it has - and continues to - burn vast portions of his home district. The memorable words were followed by a rousing standing ovation from our HF attendees and many of the audience asked for copies of his speech.

As in past years, the Hardwood Federation PAC (HFPAC) sponsored social events for members of both parties. For the second year in a row, a last minute call for votes on the Floor of Congress created time crunch issues for House members. Nonetheless, twenty-three (23) Republican Members were able to attend our Wednesday evening reception, a very good turnout despite the overlap of the vote and our event.

A record fifteen (15) Democrats joined us for breakfast the next day. These numbers indicate the extra effort by members to get to our events, and demonstrate that HF and HFPAC maintain a solid reputation and significant clout on Capitol Hill.

And for the second consecutive year, we enjoyed a stunning night tour of the U.S. Capitol, this year led by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC, 5), who proved to be a wealth of knowledge!

Looking ahead ...

These events provide us with an outstanding opportunity to establish new relationships and reconnect with friends on the Hill. And so I encourage everyone reading this to join us for next

year's Fly-In so that we can be even more effective. **Bigger and busier is the Name of the Game.** Plan on joining us!

For more information on Fly-In 2017, issues discussed, or to find out about participating in Fly-in 2018, contact the Hardwood Federation at (202) 463-2705.