

Fly-In 2019: Telling our Trade Story

By Dana Lee Cole

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Driven by concerns surrounding the tariffs on U.S. hardwood exports to China, and the resulting impacts to the hardwood industry, as you might imagine, this year's Hardwood Federation Fly-In was a whirlwind 36 hours all about Trade.

Our Message

Not to say that other issues aren't moving, but trade is having such an impact, all else pales in comparison. And so, nearly 70 hardwood industry leaders - a great mix of knowledgeable Fly-In veterans and invigorated new faces - journeyed to Washington to make real, what for too many is just a government statistic or campaign talking point.

Together we stormed the Hill and visited as many congressional offices as possible. And there, face to face, we shared our business dilemmas and made known the economic impacts the trade dispute is having on the hardwood industry.

Our message on **trade** was simple - **The hardwood industry is suffering!**

- The trade dispute is having a devastating impact on hardwood companies, workers and consumers, and is causing long term damage to international markets.
- If the hardwood industry is to survive, we need help. And we asked that the Trump Administration provide financial relief to the industry, just as other agricultural commodity groups have been provided.
- We also asked for a speedy return to the negotiating table and a quick resolve to the trade dispute.

More one-on-one interaction

In addition to our meetings on the Hill, the Hardwood Federation Political Action Committee (PAC) sponsored several social events for both Republicans and Democrats during the Fly-in. As in years past, these events provided us outstanding opportunities to reconnect with friends on the Hill, and establish new relationships.

During this year's PAC events, we heard from two outstanding Members of Congress - Congresswoman Ann Kuster (D-NH) and Congresswoman Jackie Walorski (R-IN) - who completely tuned into our issues, and are joined with us in efforts to provide relief to the industry while the trade dispute continues.

The night before our Hill meetings, Congresswoman Kuster gave a terrific pep talk focusing our energy for the long day ahead. She also spearheaded a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue encouraging him to include hardwoods in agricultural relief efforts.

To wrap up our Hill Day, Congresswoman Walorski gave a fiery keynote encouraging continued action, and shared insight gleaned from her significant efforts communicating with Administration staff, up to and including the President, on our behalf.

Where are you in this story?

The Federation Fly-In to Washington is often billed as one of the most important advocacy events of the hardwood industry. This year, more than any other year, it was indeed a whirlwind 36 hours well spent. And I cannot emphasize enough the impact of personal accounts!

So, if you were not able to be with us in D.C., **it is not too late to make some noise!** Call, write or tweet your Member of Congress and Administration officials. Tell them what the trade war is doing to your business, to your employees and to your state and local economies.

And if you need help in reaching them, contact the Hardwood Federation, 202.463.2705, and we'll connect you with our Contact Congress outreach tool.