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Speak up, Get Involved

At the Central Regional Meeting, Jeff Hanks of Bill Hanks Lumber Company, Inc., updated attendees regarding proposed North Carolina legislation titled, ***Protect/Promote NC Lumber***. Being tagged anti-LEED by certain proponents of the LEED program, the bill asks that public projects use recognized environmental building rating systems that do not disadvantage materials or products manufactured or produced in North Carolina.

“LEED requires FSC wood if you’re going to get wood points in the building process,” Hanks said. “The state of North Carolina has 18 million acres of timberland. About 100,000 acres are under FSC certification. And half of that is public agency land. So how are you going to get FSC lumber from North Carolina for a North Carolina product? You can’t do it. Why should North Carolina products be disadvantaged in that building process?”

Hanks said the “proposed” bill would require that state funded buildings seeking certification use a rating system that recognizes wood certified from any of the three third-party programs – the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the American Tree Farm System. The legislation passed the NC House, but continues to face headwinds in the Senate.

In the lively discussion that followed, an enthusiastic Chris Taylor, Baxley Equipment Company, asked, “Does everybody in here know who your state and federal representatives are? You ought to. You need to be on a first name basis with them and you ought to have their numbers in your cell phone.”

“One thing I’ve learned - if you raise enough hell with these people, they’ll listen! But you need to call them and you need to say, this is how I feel about this. They’re listening to the other side,” he said. “That’s why they vote like they do. **You** need to go see them, sit down in their office and you need to talk. Money and people make the difference. And they’re going to vote the way they hear the most people talking.”

Dana Lee Cole, Executive Director of the Hardwood Federation, agreed and suggested

members invite legislators to tour their facilities. “If they come to your facility, you’ll make that connection and they’ll see exactly what you do, how well you do it and how environmentally friendly it is,” she said.

Bottom line: Speak up and get involved! “If you have something going on in your state, I would encourage you to get involved in it and try to support it,” Hanks concluded. “If you don’t have it, try to start it.”

Latest News: As we go to press, *The Charlotte Business Journal* reports that the NC Senate approved a revised bill which “allows for the use of LEED or another rating system as long as it doesn’t disadvantage ‘building materials or furnishings, including masonry, concrete, steel, textiles, or wood that are manufactured or produced’ in North Carolina.”