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Hardwood Federation Industry Tidbits

by Dana Lee Cole, Executive Director, Hardwood Federation

Wisconsin Senator Introduces Reliable Rail Service Act

In late September, Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced the Reliable Rail Service Act, a bill to help untangle supply chain bottlenecks plaguing the hardwood industry shippers and others around the country. The bill aims to codify requirements that rail carriers provide service to a broad swath of users, including the hardwood sector, “on reasonable request.” While a path forward for the bill is limited this year, the legislation lays down an important marker to be picked up in 2023 when a new Congress convenes and considers measures to re-balance the nation’s supply chains.

Hardwood Industry, Allies Urge Continued Labor Talks to Avoid Rail Strike

On October 10, most unionized railway workers voted down a tentative bargain—reached in mid September—that avoided a nationwide strike, while allowing parties to continue to negotiate a labor package. Still unresolved, the Hardwood Federation joined more than 250 industry allies in an October 27 **letter** to President Biden, urging him to use the power of the bully pulpit to expedite a final agreement between the railroads and workers. Stay tuned for updates on this major supply chain challenge for the hardwood industry and broader economy.

Stauber Pushes Back on New USFWS Restrictions

Also in October, Rep. Pete Stauber (R-MN) sent a **letter**, which included six GOP colleagues as signatories, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), urging the agency to drop additional restrictions made to the Lakes States Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) for bat species. The letter states that the “bat species being targeted by these restrictions are not harmed by sustainable forest management,” and that healthy forest management actually mitigates the harm intended to be addressed by the new rules. The lawmakers go on to urge regulators to avoid taking steps that would damage local economies, which they point out as an “unintended consequence” of the agency’s action.

Sen. Manchin Seeks HF Input

During a meeting in the office of Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), the Federation discussed potential legislative efforts, new and existing, to promote the use of hardwood products within the context of low-carbon construction materials. Building on the conversation, Senator Manchin’s staff requested ‘recommended language’ that could be included within the “America’s Revegetation and Carbon Sequestration Act” (S. 4835), a bill that promotes carbon storage within federal

buildings, and mentioned that the Energy and Natural Resources Committee will mark-up S. 4835, at some point after the November election, and solicited ideas on how to improve the bill moving forward.