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Hardwood Federation Fly-In Kicks Off Summer

by Dana Lee Cole, Executive Director, Hardwood Federation

Following a three-year hiatus, June 14 and 15 marked the Federation Fly-In comeback. And I'm pleased to report that nearly 70 hardwood industry leaders—which included 10 association executives—visited Senate and House offices from 21 states in every region of the country, and conducted over 100 bipartisan, congressional meetings advocating for hardwood priorities.

Focusing on members of Congress who represent districts where industry members live and work, the hardwood team conducted more than 60 meetings with House lawmakers, and industry leaders also were able to deliver key messages to nearly half the U.S. Senate, racking up 40 meetings, including discussions with nine of the 21 members of the Senate Agriculture Committee—which is busy drafting its version of the farm legislation—and conversations in the offices of Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Ranking Member John Boozman (R-AR).

On the Policy Front

- The farm bill, which last passed in 2018 and is up for reauthorization, headlined this year's Fly-In. Advocates recommended recognition of the carbon capture value of hardwood products in federal accounting programs, inclusion of a hardwood products grant program to educate consumers about the sustainability of hardwood products, and doubling funding for USDA export promotion authority.
- Transportation policy was also a high priority, with participants advocating for a House Transportation Committee package that includes truck weight flexibility, streamlining the process for obtaining a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) and expediting implementation of ocean shipping reforms passed into law in 2022.
- On the tax policy front, advocates recommended permanence for 100% bonus depreciation and the Section 199A small business deduction.

Following Wednesday's Hill meetings, Fly-In participants headed to the Capitol Hill Club to thank House-side Republican industry friends with a social hour. During dinner, House Ag Committee Chair GT Thompson (R-PA) addressed the group and outlined a path forward for the farm bill, noting the importance of working together in a bipartisan fashion.

The Fly-In concluded on Thursday, June 15, with a breakfast reception, where attendees mingled with Democrat lawmakers who have a demonstrated track record of supporting our industry.

Thank you to all of the HMA members who were able to participate, including first-time participant and HMA NextGen Leaders Council member, Ian Faight, who when asked to give his impressions of the event, said, "It was a fantastic opportunity, not only to get face time with members of Congress to discuss issues facing our industry, but also to mix and mingle with industry colleagues. Thank you, Hardwood Federation team, for organizing such a great event and making arrangements for all who participated."