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Advocacy in a Time of Crisis

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Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hardwood Federation has been closely tracking developments related to legislation addressing the Covid-19 crisis. While we typically spearhead and drive advocacy efforts directly related to hardwoods, our most recent focus has been on the implementation of the various relief programs that have been enacted, and future measures that may be introduced.

More than ever before, this all-encompassing COVID-19 challenge has us coordinating with all our allies from the wood products industry to maximize impact and positive outcomes. Since coming to the Hardwood Federation, I've been active in a group of DC-based forest products association executives to discuss issues of common interest, and to identify ways to work together. And now, the COVID-19 crisis has illuminated the need for the group to work even more closely together.

Participating groups include:

- The American Forest and Paper Association & The American Forest Foundation
- The National Alliance of Forest Owners & The American Wood Council
- The National Association of State Foresters & The Forest Resource Association
- The Federal Forest Resource Coalition and several others.

To work around travel restrictions and locked down office buildings, we've gotten creative, and continue to explore new ways to communicate, in order to keep our message top of line with federal policy makers. For example:

- Via regular web-based meetings, key areas of common interest were identified and joint communications pieces, explaining the value and importance of the industry to the U.S. economy and its recovery from the COVID crisis, the need to maintain and expand domestic and international markets for U.S. wood products, measures to support the financial survival of mills, the industry's ability to retain employees, and the safety measures that already exist and those that are needed to continue wood products operations, were penned and pursued with Congress.
- We are also signing letters, individually and as a group, to Congress and the Administration that advocate for action that would support the hardwood industry including continued recognition of the entire wood products supply chain as essential.

As communication with Congress and the Administration continues, conference calls are frequent, but the use of web-based video conferencing is quickly becoming the preferred method of communicating in Washington, D.C.

At first, I was concerned that this would limit opportunities to present hardwood priorities and issues, but so far, that has not been a problem. In fact, because these virtual

gatherings are usually carefully moderated and kept on a strict schedule, everyone gets a chance to speak, and side-bar conversations and diversions from the topic at hand are much less.

As our nation works to “open up,” it is clear that we are heading towards a new normal. How and when we will see full economic recovery is up for grabs. Nonetheless, please know that the Federation will continue to work with our allies in Washington, exploring new and powerful ways to communicate, and advocating for legislation that addresses our priority issues. Thank you for your support during these extraordinary times.