

INSIDE PPAI

PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL NEWS



Taking The LEAD

LEAD Meetings Create Awareness, Build Relationships With Lawmakers

ON MARCH 24, PPAI MEMBERS and staff met with senators, congressional representatives and their legislative staffs on Capitol Hill to discuss pending legislation and issues relevant to the promotional products industry. Thirty-five PPAI members and staff conducted 67 meetings with House and Senate offices as part of the first PPAI Legislative Education & Action Day (LEAD).

Issues discussed included the outcome of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) plus other bills of interest to the industry including S. 803, the Healthy Workforce Act of 2009, which could affect incentive sales, and H.R. 3408 (S. 2882), which would limit the use of independent contractors.

The event was a success on several levels, says Steve Slagle, CAE, president and CEO of PPAI.

"The members who attended went back home very satisfied, enthusiastic and pleased with their meetings," he says. "I believe we had some quality discussions, made our points and gained some friends and supporters for our industry."

Slagle says that exercising their rights as citizens in the political process was very satisfying, and he plans for the Association and members to visit Congress again.

"We created awareness that our industry exists, represents thousands of companies, tens of thousands of jobs and billions of

dollars," he says. "From our experience this year I believe we'll want to continue these efforts at least annually."

PPAI hosted a breakfast in the Capitol building on Wednesday before participants headed off in teams for a full day of visits, says Anne Lardner, PPAI's senior manager, public affairs.

"The members left for their meetings armed with the message that promotional products are effective advertising and with statistics that prove the industry provides jobs and valuable revenue to every state in the country," she says.

Scott Siegel, MAS, president of Chicago, Illinois, supplier R.S. Owens & Co. Inc. (UPIC: RSOWENS) and chairman of the PPAI Board of Directors, and Marc Simon, chief executive officer of HALO/Lee Wayne Corporation (UPIC: LEEWAYNE), met with two Senate and three House offices from Illinois. In addition, Siegel and former PPAI board chairman Sherri Lennarson, MAS, also had a face-to-face meeting with Sen. Harkin of Iowa.

"The first thing we did was make the point that promotional products are not a gift but a proven, successful advertising medium," says Siegel. "We pointed out what they had in their office everything from coffee mugs and note pads to stress balls, pens and pencils that were promotional products."

Siegel and Simon then shared data on how many employees in Illinois work in the promotional products industry and the

LEFT The PPAI group met on the Capitol steps before being screened to enter the building. **ABOVE** Anne Lardner, who coordinated the event, joined Steve Slagle, CAE and Paul Bellantone, CAE, for visits to five Texas legislators' offices.

number of companies in the state. Siegel says the meetings had a positive outcome.

"I feel we got very courteous, usually very positive and interested responses," he says.

In addition to educating the staff on the promotional products industry, Siegel says they discussed the importance of the safe harbor clause to the industry in upcoming independent contractor legisla-

tion. They also showed support for the \$400 exclusion from taxation to use promotional products to promote wellness in the upcoming Wellness Act.

David Gephart, CAS, chief executive officer of Hillsborough, North Carolina, distributor Gephart Marketing Solutions (UPIC: dgep), managed to hit seven Congressional offices from North and South Carolina and have meetings with nine leg-

islative staff members, running from offices on the north side of the Capitol building to the south side. "And that was with a bad knee," he says with a laugh. Gephart says he also found a receptive audience.

"Basically, they were thrilled to death to have a chance to talk about anything besides healthcare," he says. "They were very open to our point of view and everybody was taking copious notes. They said they would share the information at their staff meetings."

Joe Scott, MAS, of Scott & Associates, visited his legislators with two other Minnesota constituents, Paul Miller, MAS, Sampson Miller Advertising, and David Hawes, Geiger.

"One of the things that pleasantly surprised me was that I thought lobbying was a lot of arm twisting and debating," he says. "What it turned out to be was educating them on the unintended consequences of bills to our industry. One hundred percent of the time their reaction when we explained our position was 'Oh, I didn't know that.'"

PPAI provided all participants with four position papers on different issues, complete with bill numbers, that will affect the industry.

"It was target lobbying," says Gephart. "They were able to see exactly where we stood on what issues and its effect. The folks in Texas had us well prepared."

Lisa Bibb, MAS, executive director of the Carolinas Association of Advertising and Marketing Professionals (CAAMP), switched hats at the meeting and visited three Georgia congressional offices. Bibb is also on the board of directors for the Georgia Association Promotional Product Professionals (GAPPP).

She said she was greeted at all the offices with Cokes and peanuts, major products of the state. The atmosphere was relaxed, and the aides were very receptive to her presentation.

"We were told in our PPAI briefing before the meetings that our average meeting would only take 7½ minutes," Bibb says. "But my first meeting lasted 30 minutes."

Most she spoke to were not even aware of the promotional products industry, she says.



TOP Sherri Lennarson, MAS, Scott Siegel, MAS, and Eric Ekstrand, MAS, had a chance to visit with Senator Tom Harkin (Iowa), pictured second from left. **ABOVE** Karie Cowden, MAS and Brandon Mackay, MAS take in the view from the Capitol steps.



Melissa Safford, assistant to Senator Al Franken (Minnesota), met with Joe Scott, MAS (left) and David Hawes, MAS.

“And they did not have any idea how big it is,” she says. Bibb left handouts about the industry and its position papers with the aides, and says she will post them on the CAAMP and GAPPP websites for members to use in their own efforts to inform their local representatives.

Lardner says she and the group are ready to bring the fight back to Washington next year.

“The end of the day brought sore feet but a sense of enthusiasm and empowerment to all LEADers who are already looking forward to doing this again next year,” Lardner says. “We need to continue relentlessly advocating for issues important to our industry. Every PPAI member has a local Congressional office they can visit and we will provide you with the tools you need for a successful meeting. Follow PPAI law alerts for what you can do. These measures are only successful when our position is put in front of them on a day-to-day basis.”

“Talking to your Congressman is just as effective at home,” adds Scott. “Every single PPAI member can get on the phone and schedule a meeting with their senator or congressman and go talk to them. The LEAD meeting was just the start of our lobbying efforts. This isn’t the end of it.”

View the videos to see what some of the LEAD participants have to say about their visits at www.ppbmag.com. Click on Online Exclusives. To get industry statistics and PPAI’s position papers on upcoming legislation, go to www.ppalaw.org.

PPAI LEAD 2010 PARTICIPANTS

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| Lisa Bibb, MAS, CAAMP | Promotions, Inc. |
| Mike Burns, MAS, Quikey Manufacturing | Michele Jennrich, MAS, Howard Miller Company |
| Art Bustard, MAS, Cedars Advertising | Kendra Kirks-McDougal, MAS, HALO/Lee Wayne |
| Barbara Bustard, CAS, Cedars Advertising | Bill Lazarus, MAS, Promotional Breezes |
| Eric Carr | Sherri Lennarson, MAS, Bankers Advertising Co. |
| Karie Cowden, MAS, Connect The Dots | Dale Limes, MAS, HALO/Lee Wayne |
| Dale Denham, MAS, ASI | Brandon Mackay, MAS, SnugZ USA |
| Mary Dobsch, MAS, The Chest | Paul Miller, MAS, Sampson Miller Advertising |
| Eric Ekstrand, MAS, Mort McClennan Company | Mike Schenker, MAS, Custom Intersource, LLC |
| Dave Engel, MAS, Greystone International | Joe Scott, MAS, Scott & Associates |
| Dave Gephart, CAS, Gephart Marketing Solutions | Marc Simon, HALO/Lee Wayne |
| Carl Gerlach, MAS, Gill Studios | Charlie Stevens, MAS, HALO/Lee Wayne |
| Wayne Greenberg, MAS, Geiger | Paul Bellantone, CAE, PPAI |
| Houston Hale, Geiger | Tina Filipski, PPAI |
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