



Natural building blocks for quality of life

January 3, 2011

Greetings in the New Year!

In spite of our best intentions to send greetings before the end of the year, we were caught in a Congressional end-of-the-year spending tug-of-war. Now that the 111th Congress is history, we can take a moment to reflect on the past year. The year started with a demoralized Republican Party strategizing on how to regain the congressional majority. Less than a year later, a political earthquake finds the Republican Party retaking the House majority. The GOP election success and increased Senate numbers, however, were not based on the popularity of the party but the unpopularity of the policies of the Democratic president and congressional majority.

Up in the air before adjournment was how long the current highway bill would be extended. NSSGA and its coalition partners in the Transportation Construction Coalition and Americans for Transportation Mobility lobbied hard for the extension included in the House-passed continuing resolution until the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30, 2011. It was not to be.

The Senate crafted an omnibus appropriations bill combining all the regular appropriations bill (none of which had been passed by both chambers) including an extension of SAFETEA-LU until the end of the fiscal year, like the House. Majority Leader Harry Reid was forced to abandon the omnibus bill when he failed to garner enough Republican support to overcome a threatened filibuster. Leaders went back to the drawing board and crafted a continuing resolution funding the government until March 4, 2011, including the highway programs. Republican opposition to the omnibus apparently resulted from the interest of the GOP in having more of a say in FY '11 funding. Stay tuned because this fight isn't over.

During the past year, the Government Affairs (GA) Team has been strategically participating in the legislative process, leading where an issue was of utmost concern and working with our industry and coalition partners at all times. A few of our major accomplishments in the past year were:

- Achieving an aggregates sector exclusion from mine safety legislation reported from the House Committee on Education and Labor. More than 11,000 grassroots contacts, grass tops and in-person meeting contacts were made in response to NSSGA legislative action alerts on mine safety legislation.

- Working with Transportation Construction Coalition and Americans for Transportation Mobility partners secured passage of the HIRE Act extending the surface transportation programs until the end of 2010 and providing an additional \$19 billion into the Highway Trust Fund, ensuring the fund's solvency into 2012.
- Succeeding in blocking action on the "Clean Water Restoration Act" to extend federal jurisdiction over all waters of the U.S. (by removing current defining adjective, "navigable"), through concerted grassroots and coalition solidarity.
- Initiating an unprecedented grassroots campaign by the aggregates industry, "Driving It Home," with the goal of meeting with all members of Congress to urge action on surface transportation reauthorization. In conjunction with the TCC and ATM, not only was the NSSGA program designed to orient Congress more to aggregates industry purpose by inviting meetings at member plants if possible, but also to laterally expand understanding and momentum for highway bill action among users of highways and bridges, including auto dealers, local businessmen, school officials and neighbors. Before year's end, NSSGA members met with nearly 400 current members of Congress and numerous newly-elected members to press the case for a new highway bill.
- Holding off action on "card check" legislation, with coalition and NSSGA grassroots.
- Setting record participation level in ROCKPAC, NSSGA's political action committee, making contributions to 258 candidates in the 2010 mid-term elections, with nearly 90 percent of ROCKPAC-supported candidates winning election. ROCKPAC ranks 42nd among the top 250 membership association PACs in terms of funds raised.

You might think this was all we could do in a year, but you'd be thinking of some other group. We are constantly conscious of returning value to our members. Besides focusing daily on advancing surface transportation reauthorization (the association's overriding priority), the GA Team was active on other bills – most notably the mine safety bill. Through our diligent and unending consultations, we achieved an exclusion from this proposed legislation which would have imposed an untenable burden on the aggregates industry. We hosted and attended breakfasts with members of Congress. We wrote statements and testimony for congressional hearings and arranged for testimony by NSSGA witnesses at a half dozen congressional hearings.

ROCKPAC's record-breaking fundraising of \$448,000 in 2010 was achieved in Cincinnati in February in the snow confirming the importance NSSGA members place on actively participating in the political process. Our ROCKPAC trustees held a strategy session in October and have set ambitious goals for the future.

While Congress kept us busy, we also found time to work with and educate the administration on a wide-range of issues. The Office of Management and Budget, departments of Transportation and Labor, and EPA among others saw NSSGA staff pass through their doors as we engaged on behalf of the industry.

That brings us to our number one asset – you. You are the real power behind all of our activities. It is precisely because of the efforts many of you have put into building relationships with your elected officials that help us achieve our goals in Washington. As you well know, many of those in Congress began at the local and state levels and it's true that if you educate them while they are young, they will remember you for life. Your concerted grassroots contacts made the difference in the fight for an exclusion from the mine safety legislation. Your commitment made the difference in derailing the Clean Water Restoration Act and deferring action on “card check” legislation that threatened to take away employee’s right to a secret ballot in determining whether to unionize.

Although proud of our accomplishments in the past year we did not achieve reauthorization of the SAFETEA-LU. As we enter the New Year, we have renewed our commitment to achieving this goal, but recognize we face perhaps the biggest challenge we have ever faced. Although a newly elected Republican House majority is already indicating intention to closely review proposed federal regulations that have burdened business, the new GOP majority recognizes its election success was a result of the profligate ways of the outgoing Democrat majority. It is a chastened Republican majority retaking control of the House and with bigger numbers in the Senate but confronting an unemployment rate hovering near 10 percent and a public looking for change – more job creation and less government spending.

Our challenge is to convince the public and through it elected officials that investing in America’s transportation infrastructure is an investment in economic growth, job creation, cleaner air, safer roads, and freedom of mobility treasured by all of us. We thank you for your partnership over the past year. We ask you to renew that partnership in the new 112th Congress.

Sincerely,



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