



Adventures in Advocacy

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Advocating Congress: Taking on the “Little Legislatures”

by Sean D. Shields

When it comes to political advocacy in the structural building components industry, time is of the essence and resources are limited. Within those constraints, our advocacy efforts are rendered useless if we spread them out over all 535 members of Congress. Fortunately, it is possible—and prudent—to adopt a “divide and conquer” approach by targeting only the key committees with jurisdiction over the legislation affecting our industry.

Before we get into the committees on which manufacturers should focus their efforts, let’s discuss the legislation/committee connection. Consider that Congress overall deals with close to three thousand bills and resolutions during each two-year session, and almost five hundred of those measures make it through the committee process.

In fact, it can be said a lion’s share of the work accomplished in Congress is done through its committees. Sometimes referred to as “little legislatures,” every member of Congress belongs to at least one committee, and in the Senate, Senators may serve on up to three.

Every bill introduced by a lawmaker is assigned to one or more committees, which form, for lack of a better metaphor, the first line of defense against bad legislation. In theory, the level of scrutiny a specialized committee of legislators (the Senate Judiciary Committee, for example) can bring to bear on a measure (an immigration bill) should be adequate to find its flaws and either fix them through amendments or defeat it.

For the structural building components industry, the committees to focus on in 2006 are dictated by our issues. Immigration reform is likely to be our top issue this year, and as a consequence, members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees will be prime targets for our legislative advocacy efforts.

Another key issue for 2006 will be reform of regulations affecting small businesses and their employees. The committees with likely jurisdiction over legislation on this issue are the House Committee on Small Business; House Committee on Energy & Commerce; Senate Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee; Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee; and Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee.

Finally, reform of our nation’s health care system in order to make health insurance more affordable for employers to offer employees will be an issue at the forefront of Congress’ agenda this year. Due to the nebulous nature of this issue, it is difficult to predict where the key bills affecting our industry will end up. However, a good place to start is the

same list of committees with jurisdiction over small business reform in addition to the Senate Finance Committee.

By targeting a few measures dealing with each of these issues, and the committees they’re assigned to, we can bring our perspective to Congress by talking to only 20-30 lawmakers for each bill instead of lobbying all 535. That’s only five percent of the whole, and a realistic goal for our industry.

The bottom line: If you live and work in any of the states listed on page 77, you are the constituent of a key lawmaker in our advocacy efforts this year, and your industry needs your help! Consider registering and attending the **SBC** Legislative Conference in Washington, DC (May 10-12), scheduling a meeting or plant tour with your lawmaker while they are in town, or engaging in your lawmaker phone call and letter writing efforts through the Legislative Action! emails.

Of course, *no matter what state you live in*, active participation is the key! In the April issue, this column will explore why developing relationships with lawmakers is beneficial to you beyond influencing public policy. **SBC**

a note on committees: There are four basic types of committees: standing, select/special, joint and conference. Each of these committees, no matter the type, is given jurisdiction over a scope of issues, which is generally described by the name of that committee. In other words, the House Committee on Transportation & Trade considers legislation that broadly addresses either transportation or trade issues. Standing committees are permanent and consist of only lawmakers from that chamber (i.e., Senate committees only have Senators). Select/special committees are created by their respective chambers for specific purposes. While they are not considered permanent upon their creation, many of the ones that exist today, like the Special Committee on Ethics, appear to be around for good.

As the name suggests, joint committees have a mixture of Senators and Representatives to address administrative issues and conduct studies. Finally, conference committees also consist of a mixture of lawmakers and are quickly formed and disbanded to work out disagreements between differing versions of the same bill passed by the House and the Senate.

Alabama:

Senator Jeff Sessions (Labor, Judiciary)
Representative Spencer Bachus (Judiciary)

Arizona:

Senator Jon Kyl (Finance, Judicial)
Representative John Shadegg (Commerce)
Representative Jeff Flake (Judiciary)

California:

Senator Diane Feinstein (Judiciary, Energy)
Representative Henry Waxman (Commerce)

Idaho:

Senator Larry Craig (Energy)
Senator Michael Crapo (Finance)
Representative Butch Otter (Commerce)

Iowa:

Senator Charles Grassley
(Chair Finance, Judiciary)
Senator Tom Harkin (Labor)

Kentucky:

Senator Jim Bunning (Finance, Energy)
Representative Ed Whitfield (Commerce)

North Carolina:

Senator Richard Burr (Energy, Labor)
Representative Howard Coble (Judiciary)

New Mexico:

Senator Jeff Bingaman (Finance, Labor, Energy)
Senator Pete Domenici (Chair of Energy)
Representative Heather Wilson (Commerce)
Representative Tom Udall (Small Business)

New York:

Senator Charles Schumer (Finance, Judiciary)
Representative Eliot Engel (Commerce)
Representative Vito Fossella (Commerce)

Ohio:

Senator Mike DeWine (Judiciary, Labor)
Representative Steve Chabot
(Judiciary, Small Business)
Representative Patrick Tiberi (Workforce)

Oregon:

Senator Gordon Smith (Finance, Energy)
Senator Ron Wyden (Finance, Energy)
Representative Greg Walden (Commerce)

Tennessee:

Senator Bill Frist (Finance, Judiciary)
Senator Lamar Alexander (Labor)
Representative William Jenkins (Judiciary)
Representative Marsha Blackburn (Commerce)

Utah:

Senator Orrin Hatch (Finance, Labor, Judiciary)
Representative Chris Cannon (Judiciary)

Wisconsin:

Senator Herb Kohl (Judiciary)
Senator Russ Feingold (Judiciary)

In Memoriam

Robert E. Mort

Robert (Bob) E. Mort, 84, passed away at his residence in Hermitage, PA, on December 12, 2005, after an extended illness.

Mort was born on March 17, 1921, in Poland, OH. He was an alumnus of Poland Seminary High School, the U.S. Army Midwestern Signal School, Youngstown State University and Swartz School in Pittsburgh. Mort married wife Donna R. Haessly in 1947.



Mort spent much of his career in the steel products and construction industry, and was considered an icon. He was the president and chief executive officer of Inter-Lock Steel Co. He held the same titles at sister companies Unity Machine Tool and Die Co. and Standard Aluminum Company of America. Together, these companies supplied industrial machinery and other steel products to the construction industry. Inter-Lock was eventually sold to MiTek Industries. Mort was one of the founding members of the Truss Plate Institute (TPI) and the Component Manufacturers Council (CMC). He served two terms as TPI president (1977 and 1991).

Mort was a decorated war veteran, having served during World War II with the 232nd Signal Company on detached service with the 7th Australian Infantry Division and other combat units throughout the Pacific theater of operations on detached service.

Throughout his life and especially in his retirement, Mort was an active community leader. He founded the Shenango Valley Urban League and Hickory Business and Professional Men’s Association and was instrumental in raising funds for the establishment of Shenango Valley Osteopathic Hospital. He was a member of Free and Accepted Masons Lodge 686, the Zem Zem Shrine of Erie and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Mort was also a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Sharon, PA.

Beyond his dedication to community service, Mort’s hobbies included flying and sport fishing. He wrote two books chronicling his early life, World War II experiences and children’s stories.

He is survived by his wife; three children, Patricia Mort, Thomas Mort and Mary Haessly; eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his beloved son, Robert E. Mort Jr., his parents, five brothers and two sisters.

A funeral service for Mort was held on December 17, 2005, at the J. Bradley McGonigle Funeral Home Inc. Large attendance numbers revealed just how missed Bob will be. Bob’s son Tom Mort was touched that so many of Bob’s friends and acquaintances attended the funeral. Tom commented on why his father was liked by so many. “Bob was genuine and acted with integrity in both business and in personal relationships. What you see is what you got with Bob,” he remembered.

Memorial contributions may be made in his memory to Prince of Peace Center, 502 Darr Ave., Box 89, Farrell, PA, 16121; or to Keystone Kids Program in care of Keystone Blind Association, 1230 Stambaugh Ave., Sharon, PA, 16146.

Watch for an in-depth account of Robert Mort Sr.’s contribution to the industry in an upcoming issue of **SBC Magazine**. [Source: The Sharon Herald, Sharon, PA] **SBC**

Submissions to “In Memoriam” can be emailed to editor@sbcmag.info. Photos are encouraged and will run as space allows. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

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