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NASF "Washington Forum" A Success in 2007

Technology, New Rules, Trade and Energy Issues Showcased

Over 100 finishers, suppliers and industry technical professionals flew to Washington this spring for the annual NASF Washington Forum. The event served up a full range of top speakers on industry trends and issues, including a new industry-OSHA alliance, pending EPA air emission rules, global chemical and metals trends and ongoing industry efforts with the Pentagon on defense coatings needs and research. Presentations are posted on the NASF website at www.nasf.org.

The meeting was capped off on the third day of meetings with the industry's visits on Capitol Hill to press lawmakers for greater support of U.S. small manufacturing concerns and to challenge existing China currency policies hurting finishing and related industries.

Two members of Congress -upcoming freshman Republican Peter Roskam (R-IL) as well as Republican presidential candidate Duncan Hunter (R-CA) - also joined attendees at evening receptions to discuss the domestic manufacturing outlook and global economic issues. Representative Roskam, who formed a close relationship during his recent campaign with the Delawder family of Illinois-based finishing firm SWD, Inc., pointed out the need to stop runaway domestic cost burdens for manufacturers.

Representative Hunter, a long-time conservative Republican from San Diego, is stumping the country to build support for legislation he has introduced with Democrats (H.R. 782) to curb China's currency misalignment. Mr. Hunter, who was invited by Dixie Industrial Finishing executive Jim Jones to stop in at the event,

spent two hours exchanging with participants and told the crowd that Congress must act to level the global economic playing field for U.S. manufacturing. While acknowledging his "dark horse" candidacy, Hunter emphasized the prime importance of stumping on the campaign trail to protect U.S.-based manufacturing from being shredded by unfair trade practices from U.S. trading partners.

Among other highlights were remarks by the head of federal OSHA, Ed Foulke, who presided over the signing of a new cooperative alliance between the surface finishing industry and OSHA. In addition to Foulke, industry representatives who signed the agreement were NASF President Ray Lucas, Government Advisory Committee Chairman Bill Wiggins, NASF Board and GAC Member, Joelle Zak. Through this new partnership, OSHA and industry will develop a good practices manual to reduce workplace exposures to chemicals and develop improved safety and health guidelines for non-English speaking employees in finishing operations.

The day and a half agenda also featured experts on a variety of other regulatory, policy, and technical presentations as well, including:

- EPA's new air emissions rule for plating and polishing operations;
- Global regulatory developments (REACH, RoHS and others);
- New nickel science and risk trends updates;
- U.S. manufacturing competitiveness and domestic policy developments;
- NADCAP certification process;
- Global warming and energy policy issues pending on Capitol Hill and
- Department of Homeland Security rules affecting suppliers and finishers.

The 2007 NASF Washington Forum was, once again, a resounding success in expanding the industry's knowledge of upcoming issues and bringing the industry's message to Washington. An estimated one-third of the participants were new attendees. If you were unable to attend this year's event mark your calendar now and don't miss the 2008 NASF Washington Forum, April 22-24. The informative technical sessions and the extraordinary efforts of some of the industry's state delegations - particularly those from Georgia and Illinois - set the new standard for the Washington Forum in 2008.

In the meantime, industry attendees who heard the message from lawmakers on the importance of keeping in touch year-round are now back home planning plant tours for - and next contacts with - their members of Congress. *P&SF*

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