Spring Lobby Day 2015

The Geosynthetic Materials Association (GMA) hosted the first of its two 2015 Lobby Days, April 20–21, in Washington, D.C. It was an exciting opportunity for our members and industry leaders to continue to educate the 114th United States Congress on the important role that geosynthetics play in creating environmentally friendly, long-lasting, and cost-saving products, applications, and services that strengthen our country's infrastructure.

The two-day event started April 20 with the election of Keith Gardner (Crown Resources) as the new GMA Executive Council chairman and ended with the celebration of past-chair Boyd Ramsey's (GSE) time in office. In addition, Fred Chuck (TenCate) was elected 1st vice-chair and Doug Brown (Tensar) was elected 2nd vice-chair of the executive council, GMA's governing body.

During Ramsey's four-year tenure, GMA experienced an expansion of its membership, financial resources, and its government relations program. Lobby Day attendees also celebrated the language "geosynthetic materials" being used for the first time in federal legislation—the U.S. Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) signed into law by President Obama in 2014. The evening concluded with Jeff Davis of the Eno Center for Transportation briefing attendees on critical issues facing the transportation industry such as funding for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Lobby Day 2015 continued April 21 when 27 GMA members and representatives took the geosynthetics message to Capitol Hill. The day's robust schedule was made possible by our government relations partnership with the D.C.-based firm, Whitmer & Worrall. GMA members met with 23 congressional offices representing 14 states (Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). These meetings delivered the message about the positive impacts that geosynthetic materials have on infrastructure projects at the federal and state level.

The congressional visits included meetings with key policy advisors in nine U.S. House and 14 Senate offices. Meetings were highlighted by in-depth discussions of the transportation and aviation reauthorization bills. GMA's goal is to encourage the inclusion of geosynthetics language to both bills, similar to that passed in the WRRDA bill last year.

GMA members also had the opportunity to talk to members of congress about other important issues such as coal ash and the gasoline tax.
Member companies in attendance in April were: Agru America, Crown Resources, Engineered Polymer Technologies, GSE Environmental, Hanes Geo Components, Huesker, Polymer Group Inc., Propex, TenCate, Tensar, Thrace Linq, TRI, and Willacoochee Industrial Fabrics. GMA collaborators from Central Fiber and the Erosion Control Technology Council were also on hand for the meetings, as well as IFAI staff members.

GMA's Fall Lobby Day is set for Oct. 28–29, 2015.

State and local update

During the past decade, GMA has developed a strong presence in state capitols across the country and in Washington, D.C. These efforts have been affirmed by successful advocacy for its membership and the geosynthetics industry specifically in 11 state transportation departments (Florida, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington). We look forward to expanding those efforts in 2016. The objective for these DOT meetings is to educate high-level state officials regarding the importance of growing geosynthetics usage (market share) and to promote an open dialogue regarding projects and opportunities that benefit GMA member companies.

This year, GMA will continue to encourage its members to be involved in the state and local efforts. GMA members will be invited to attend meetings with state agencies to provide their industry expertise.

In 2014, our industry's combined revenue exceeded $2.5 billion and spending on U.S. highway planning and construction exceeded $35 billion. Increased member and executive council involvement in our government relations program will help GMA continue to provide programming and build relationships that will grow our member's market share for years to come.

For more information, contact Jonathan Curry, IFAI division supervisor, jicurry@ifai.com, 651-225-6956.

>>> For more, search GMA at www.GeosyntheticsMagazine.com