

The Harrisburg Grassroots Lobbying Trip, May 8, 2017

by Eileen Anderson, Director, Government Relations



Before launching into a recap of SMC's lobbying trip it is essential to thank all of those who made the trip possible.

Luncheon Underwriter
Commonwealth Foundation

Sponsors
C.W. Howard Insurance Agency, Inc.
CORE Environmental Services
Grossman, Yanak & Ford, LLP
Guy Chemical Company, Inc.
PINNACLE Financial Strategies, LLC
Precision Defense Services

Location Host
PA Manufacturers Association (PMA)

Speakers

Nathan A. Benefield, V.P. of Policy, Commonwealth Foundation
Carl A. Marrara, V.P. of Government Affairs, PA Manufacturers Association (PMA)
John Nikoloff, Partner, ERG Partners

Twenty-five members and guests spent the afternoon on Capitol Hill. SMC's 4 teams had meetings scheduled with 24 lawmakers and Governor Wolf's Director of Policy and Planning. Some points addressed during the meetings included: need for state pension reform; impact of a mandated increase in the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$ 12.00/hour; the workforce shortage; and surprise billing/balance billing. To view SMC's 2017 State Position Papers go to <http://smc.org/services/issues-advocacy/> .

Reports from Teams 1- 4

The meetings are led by the team captain and lawmakers/staff respond. Below are the predominant issues discussed. Some issues have seen action since May 8th.

Pension Reform – No Democrat will vote for pension reform, meaning an option to move new employees to defined contribution and away from defined benefit plans, because of the constant pressure from unions. House Democratic leadership said the priority should be paying down the unfunded liabilities estimated at \$60-\$74 billion.

House and Senate Republicans say pension reform should be done. The Senate has a proposal, SB 1. Last session's bill was just 3 votes shy of passage and would have saved \$10 billion over 30 years.

Update – As of June 7th, The Senate passed SB 1 which is now in the House and due for a vote this week. SMC lobbied the entire House on June 6th requesting passage of SB 1.

Minimum Wage – Rep. Reed, the Majority Floor Leader in the House, is not focused on the mandated increase in the minimum wage to \$12.00/hr. because it was presented in the Governor's budget mainly as a way to raise revenue from the Personal Income Tax. Republicans do not support an increase to \$12.00/hr. Democrats are for an increase – anything that will pass. According to the Governor's Director

of Policy and Planning, they are looking at a phased-in approach, want an increase now and in the future will move to a higher wage.

Property Tax – It is currently one of the top issues in the Senate. While some said they will hold firm on “No increase in the Personal Income Tax” which is a huge part of any revenue raising solution to eliminate property taxes, others said they are willing to try SB 76. Property tax elimination has a multitude of issues. There will be winners and losers. There are staggering misconceptions about the legislation. SB 76 will not totally eliminate property taxes; there will still be county and borough taxes and the 320 school districts that have outstanding debt will still collect some property tax to pay down their debt. A lawmaker’s view on property tax reform is very dependent on what district and region he/she represents.

Workforce – There was agreement among lawmakers on the 2 primary bills that SMC supports to improve workforce training and encourage young people to opt for the trades. HB 25, Career Bound, provides for the creation of workforce development programs for middle and high school students. Tax credits will be available to businesses who participate. HB 202 unanimously passed the House and is now in the Senate. It creates an alternative pathway for career and technical education students to demonstrate readiness for high school graduation

Other concerns of small employers mentioned in the meetings included lack of knowledge of existing training resources available and the time spent to complete applications. SMC members pointed out that the challenge is not to create jobs but to fill the existing jobs. In some cases growth in a business is stymied by lack of skilled technicians. Lawmakers said they hear this often.

Surprise/Balance Billing – A memo was introduced Monday May 8th in the House and similar legislation is in the Senate Banking & Insurance Committee. Much of the state has provider networks which are designed to be narrow in order to cut down on costs and they have a severely limited number of primary care and specialist providers and possibly only one hospital. Surprise billing legislation will mandate that providers and insurers who offer services within an in-network facility as part of a patient’s treatment should accept in-network rates, whether or not the providers are in that plan’s network. This will remove consumers from disputes between providers and insurers over out-of-network bills.

Action Steps – SMC will be in Harrisburg next week to continue work on legislation with lawmakers on specific committees, distribute additional position papers to lawmakers not reached on May 8th, and meet with other lawmakers to discuss SMC views.

Drew Stein, SMC Board of Directors, Detroit Switch, Inc. speaks with Rep. Joe Markosek, Democratic Chair of the House Appropriations Committee 5-8-17



SMC Members and Guests

SMC extends a sincere "Thank You" to all of those who were willing and able to take a day away from their businesses to carry the small business message for themselves and their peers to Harrisburg. lawmakers. There is no more effective lobbying than that that comes directly from those in the trenches!

Team 1

Steve Zbur, CORE Environmental Services
Bill Ringle, SystemRingle
Donald Johnston, Grossman, Yanak & Ford, LLP
Alex Palmer, Grossman, Yanak & Ford, LLP
Rose Morris, Abram's Bed, LLC
Beth Machine, Abram's Bed, LLC
David Fair, SMC Business Councils
John Laslavic, ThistleSea Business Development, LLC
Jean DeFilippis, ARCpoint Labs of Pittsburgh

Team 2

Jim Logan, Battery Giant of Pittsburgh
Marilyn Landis, Basic Business Concepts, Inc.
Ryan Breen, Breen Law Firm, LLC
Sherwood Stephens, CPA
Judy Wojanis, Wojanis Supply Company, Inc.
Eric Riske, General Window Cleaning, Inc.
Tom Donoghue, Donoghue Project Consulting, LLC

Team 3

Ted Rogers, Aero Tech Designs
Drew Stein, Detroit Switch, Inc.
Denny Ross, Denny Ross Consulting Corporation
Kathy Stewart, Hyper-Kinetix, Inc.
Jeffrey Stewart, Hyper-Kinetix, Inc.
Joe Weinkle, CLU

Team 4

Lawrence Sommers, Jr., C.W. Howard Insurance Agency, Inc
Vic Conrad, PINNACLE Financial Strategies, LLC
Kim Yerace, Petroleum Technical Services
Dan Dibeler, K & D Factory Service
Eileen Anderson, SMC Business Councils

Ashley Seibert, SMC Business Councils, Photographer

Lawmakers' and Staff Meetings*

Charlie O'Neill/ Sen. Vulakovich
Eric Kratz/ Sen. Ward
Cheryl Schriener/ Sen. Vogel
Matt Hilliard/ Rep. Reed
Rep. Dunbar
Sarah Galbally/ Governor Wolf's Director of Policy & Planning
Carrie Amann/ Deputy Secretary
Alison Hagler/ Rep. English
Elise Argall/ Sen. Reschenthaler
Aaron Bonnaure/ Sen. Reschenthaler
Stacey Connors, Esq./ Sen Browne
Sen. Bartolotta/ Katrina Anderson
Colleen DeFrank/ Sen. Fontana
Gabe Spece/ Rep. Frankel

Rep. Markosek
Eric Dice/ Rep. Markosek
Wendy Lewis/ Rep. Markosek
Mike Passiment/ Rep. Markosek
Chris Stets/ Rep. Dermody
Sen. Hutchinson
Justin Leventry/ Sen. Hutchinson
Nathen Akers/ Sen. Hutchinson
Senator White
Noah Karn / Sen. Regan
Elizabeth Weitzel/ Sen. Scarnati
Tim Rodrigo/ Rep. Saylor
Rep. Eli Evankovich
Rep. Rick Saccone

**Three additional meetings were canceled at the last minute and those meetings are rescheduled for make-up next week.*

SMC's four teams meet with Governor Wolf's Director of Policy Planning, Sarah Galbally, Carrie Amann, Deputy Secretary 5_8_17

2017 Grassroots Lobbyists on the Capitol Steps 5-8-17

