

Government Relations Today

Spotlight on Legislation: America COMPETES

Volume 1, Issue 2
30 June 2010

Raise your hand if you would like to support the sciences and technology in the United States education system.

Raise your hand if you would like students in the United States to become more competitive in the global market in these areas.

Now, raise your hand if you would like Congress to initiate and perpetuate a negative characterization of the Promotional Products Industry.

A piece of legislation that has recently passed the U.S. House accomplishes all three — and we should all be up in arms.

The COMPETES Act

The America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act aims to maintain and strengthen our nation’s global economic competitiveness by improving science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education. The law also establishes a variety of basic research programs in several agencies. The purpose of H.R. 5116 is to renew the COMPETE Act programs.

Unfortunately, at the last minute, Brad Ellsworth (D-IN)—who was not on the committee that wrote the bill—offered the following amendment:

“No funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act or the amendments made by this Act may be used to purchase gift items, knickknacks, souvenirs, trinkets, or other items without direct educational value.”

In very short order, the amendment was accepted without discussion or debate and the bill passed the House. Now it goes to the Senate—and we need your help.

The Impact

For some, the impact isn’t immediately visible.

How can promotional products be used in a government program anyway? This was the question posed to PPAI by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. Federal agencies use this advertising medium more often than we might think—consider the U.S. Census. Recently, \$10 million was spent by the Census Bureau on a promotion to improve outreach. The promotion included a canvas tote bag promotion filled with census–logoed promotional products including water bottles, toy footballs, mouse pads, paperclips, pencils, luggage tags and key chains. The items are designed to improve outreach. The Census Bureau reports that for every one percent increase in mail response it will save taxpayers \$85 million in costs, primarily from hired temporary employees collecting the information in door-to-door interviews. Find out more about this effort [here](#).

Limiting the use of promotional products to those of “direct educational value” can impede the efforts of any agency or association receiving funding appropriated from this legislation. For the participating programs, promotional products could be used in other ways than traditional advertising. They could be used as reminders for members or rewards for employees.

Even more importantly, the language used in this amendment to describe promotional products sets a precedent that the industry cannot accept. Representative Ellsworth or other congress people who share his opinion of promotional products could continue to insert this type of language or the exact same language into future legislation.

Take Action

Until there is a bill number assigned to COMPETES, it doesn’t make sense to contact all Senators, but there are other ways you can take action, ways you can do your part for the industry.

In order to educate Representative Ellsworth on the effectiveness of promotional products and the strength and presence of the industry in Indiana so that he will no longer continue to employ a negative description of the industry, you can take the following action:

- If you live in Ellsworth’s district, educate him in a polite way about what promotional products are, how they support business objectives, and the strength of the industry in Indiana (Jobs: 5,718, Companies: 619, Revenue: \$110.1 Million). You can find a script [here](#).
- If you know someone who lives in his district, ask him or her to make this phone call or set up a meeting. Ellsworth’s district includes the cities of Bloomington, Boonville, Coatesville, Centerpoint, Dale, Evansville, Fillmore, Fulda, Holland, Huntingburg, Owensburg, Newburgh, Princeton, Spencer, Terre Haute, Vincennes, Wadesville, W. Lafayette and Washington.

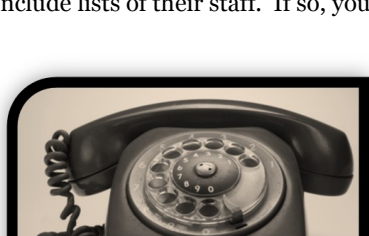
Advocacy NOW

Forty Days Until the August Recess of U.S. Congress – Have you set up your meeting?

How do I set up the meeting?

Before setting up any meetings, you need to know who your legislators are. Find out [here](#).

Your legislator’s websites should include office locations with phone numbers and addresses on the landing page. If they do not, look for a “contact” button or link. Some congress people even include lists of their staff. If so, your first contact should be with the scheduler.



Call the office and ask if they have a specific procedure for scheduling meetings. In most cases, they will need an official request via e-mail.

What do I say?

In your call, e-mail or letter, include the date that you would like to meet, how many people will be attending, and the issues you would like to discuss.

Tips:

1. Always say that you are a constituent
2. Be specific when speaking about the issues by including bill numbers
3. Don’t bring more than five people

Advocacy Success

Government Relations Efforts Promoted at Regional Trade Show Booth

The Regional Government Relations Council of the Upper Midwest Association of Promotional Professionals (UMAPP) hosted a booth to educate their members about pending U.S. Legislation regarding Independent Contractor law at UMAPP’s annual booth show on May 20 at the St. Paul River Centre in St. Paul, Minnesota.

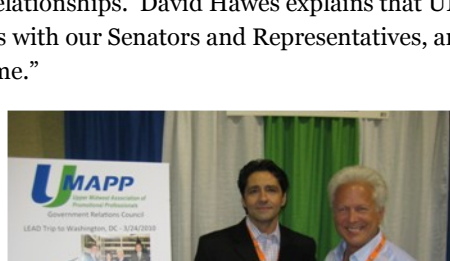


The booth included educational information regarding the IC issue and a petition. When a member signed, they received a special IC bag tag.

Creating a booth specifically for government relations is a great step regional associations can take to help educate their members about the legislative issues facing the industry. One of the main challenges associations face in promoting advocacy is creating awareness, notes David J. Hawes, MAS, chairman of UMAPP council. “Our membership is fragmented; consequently it’s difficult to communicate time sensitive information efficiently. When our members become aware of the pending legislation that would harm our industry, they’re eager to become advocates.”

To help educate and promote advocacy, UMAPP includes information in their publications as well as on social networking sites. “We include a legislative article in the quarterly UMAPP Navigator, and the GRC has a prominent position on our website and on LinkedIn. We offer legislative updates in the UMAPP Distributor Xpress, and our new GRC booth at the recent UMAPP Booth Show was very effective,” Hawes says.

One of the most effective examples regional associations can set for their members is creating relationships. David Hawes explains that UMAPP has, “developed ongoing relationships with our Senators and Representatives, and we encourage our members to do the same.”

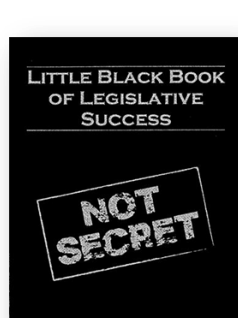


David Hawes, MAS, Chairman, UMAPP Government Relations Council, and Paul Bellantone, executive vice president of PPAI

Questions or comments? E-mail us at EmeA@ppai.org or call 972-570-3282.

In this Issue...

- The COMPETES Act
- Advocacy NOW
- Advocacy Awareness at Regional Show



Click here to read the newest version of PPAI’s *Little Black Book of Legislative Success*.

Each state page on the [PPAILAW](#) site now has individualized versions as well.