

Focused on the Fly-In

Registration is now open for NACD's annual Washington Fly-In, arguably one of the most anticipated events on the calendar



Andy Brice London

Be sure to mark April 25-26 on your schedule because this year's Fly-In promises to be bigger and better than ever before.

Each spring, NACD welcomes members to the nation's capital for a unique opportunity to meet the lawmakers face to face and make a difference.

Another packed agenda is promised and the two-day event will provide the chance to discuss key issues and get your voice heard on Capitol Hill.

By educating members of Congress about the importance of chemical distribution and how your business contributes to the economy, this is a chance to help shape future policy for the good of the industry.

"Growing that relationship with your member of Congress is invaluable," says Doug Leigh, NACD's manager, legislative affairs. "More and more members are seeing the benefits of attending the Fly-In and we're expecting another record turnout this year. Our goal is over 100 attendees. We're starting registration a little earlier so hopefully we can exceed that."

There have been several changes to the usual format this year, says Leigh. The event is now taking place midweek, on Wednesday and Thursday, giving attendees even more time for meetings and networking.

"Now we've got two full days, we're hoping to break our meetings record of 200 that we set last year," he adds.

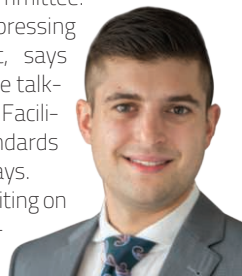
Whether you are a regular at the event or this is your first time at the Fly-In, NACD is always on hand to ensure you get the most out of your trip. In response to member feedback, information outlining some of the most pertinent issues that are going to be raised will be sent out in advance of the meeting, providing a primer before you arrive in Washington.

"We're making a lot of the materials available to our members ahead of time this year so they can grow their knowledge about the key issues we're going to be talking about on the Hill."

There will also be the usual preparation session on the opening morning to discuss the main talking points, he says. Plenty of support will be available on the day too, with members accompanied to meetings by NACD staff or someone from the Government Affairs Committee.

There are plenty of pressing issues to talk about, says Leigh. "We'll definitely be talking about the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) program," he says.

"Right now, we're waiting on the Government Ac-



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Doug Leigh
Manager, legislative affairs, NACD

countability Office report that senators requested. It should be coming out in June so the timing of the Fly-In is perfect. We're going to be right in their ears just before they start putting pen to paper."

Another area of focus will be rail reform and the ongoing issues with rail shippers. "We've been working with the Surface Transportation Board and will be looking at how the customer is being treated, how best to address the lack of communication, and price increases."

The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and tax relief will also be among the hot topics being discussed, he says.

Attendees will be invited to join various receptions too, with special guest speakers and members of the Congressional Chemistry Caucus – a group formed to promote pro-chemistry policies and encourage young people to join the industry.

"On the second day of the Fly-In, we always have amazing speakers from the different agencies talking about all the hottest issues," says Leigh. "Last year, we had the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) talking about new food legislation and the regulatory guidance coming through the pipeline. Our regulatory department does a fantastic job of scheduling speakers that are very relevant."

Coming to the event certainly pays dividends, helping to build fantastic long-term relationships that can really help your business, notes Leigh.

"From a member's perspective, knowing who your senators and representatives are and being able to call on them is invaluable," he says.

"Members of Congress get to hear what chemical distributors do, understand who we are, and where we are in the supply chain. We can educate them on the issues that are important to us.

"As an association, most of our members are small businesses with an average of 26 employees. Most members of Congress don't realize that many are family-owned companies that have been passed down from generation to generation. It's very valuable to communicate that on the Hill – it makes them realize that their regulation is affecting small businesses too."

Your attendance really can make a difference, says Leigh. NACD members have helped progress wide-ranging legislation by talking to lawmakers in recent years, including both CFATS and TSCA reform. Make sure your voice is heard this April. ■