

Members Lobby for a Day



NBFAA members roamed the halls of Congress, rubbing elbows with the nation's most powerful group of people, all the while advocating issues important to them, their businesses and the industry. NBFAA's first *Day on Capitol Hill*, held May 1 and 2, gave them first hand experience in legislative affairs.

"I thought it was an awesome opportunity to interact with the congressmen and their staffs," said Kevin McGraw, associate counsel for Protection One Inc. "This was my first time to participate in an NBFAA function. I was impressed by the camaraderie amongst all the attendees and how, despite being competitors, everyone was so willing to come together and work for the good of the industry."

More than 40 NBFAA members, including association board members and state leaders from across the United States, joined the Government Relations team during the two-day event. In addition to the visits to the Capitol Hill offices, members met with Congressmen Jim Saxton (R-NJ) and Michael Arcuri (D-NY) at evening events on Tuesday night, May 1.

Saxton is a 26 year member of the

U.S. House of Representatives for New Jersey's Third Congressional District. Arcuri is a freshman congressman from Utica, N.Y. He began his career in public service in 1993, when he was elected Oneida County District Attorney.

Congressman Vito Fossella (R-NY) was the guest speaker for the May 2 luncheon at the Capitol Hill Club. Serving in the U.S. Congress since 1997, Fossella was selected by NBFAA to receive the first "Legislator of the Year" award at the association's Fall Conference in 2006 in recognition of his sponsorship and persistence to ensure passage in the House of Representatives of a college life safety bill.



Members of the Connecticut Alarm & Systems Integrators Association met with Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT) (middle) during the NBFAA Day on Capitol Hill. CASIA Executive Director Pat Shea Remes (left), President Harvey Clark (right) and past president David Wilson (far right) discussed issues important to the industry with Shays.

Fossella and several co-sponsors, including Arcuri, have introduced new legislation supported by NBFAA. H.R. 1409, the *College Life Safety and Fire Prevention Act*, would establish a demonstration incentive program within the U.S. Department of Education to promote the professional installation of fire alarm detection systems, or other fire prevention technologies in qualified student housing, dormitories, and other university buildings.

"The *Day on Capitol Hill* was less a lecture on how Washington works, but more a hands-on visit to Congress," said NBFAA Director of Government Relations John Chwat.

Chwat made individual appointments for each and every attendee to speak with their elected representatives during Capitol Hill visits on the second day. Before setting out, members were briefed on the issues

During their visits, NBFAA members asked their elected officials in the U.S. House of Representatives to support passage of H.R. 1409 by co-sponsoring the bill. They urged them to push for passage by the House Education and Labor Committee and the U.S. House. Visits in the U.S. Senate urged that similar legislation

be introduced in the Senate, with the ultimate goal of passing and signing this life safety legislation.

“It has been a long time since I have been on Capitol Hill and I enjoyed it very much. It is rewarding to be asking for help on such important life safety issues,” said Beth Cain, co-owner Cain Security Systems Inc.

Other legislative issues that NBFAA members discussed with their representatives included:

- The Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS) Transition Rules
- *Secure America’s Homes and Businesses Act*
- *Long Term Care Life Safety Act*
- Federal Background Checks for Electronic Life Safety, Security & Systems Professionals
- Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) Language

All of the association’s positions relative to these issues are discussed in the following pages in *Newsline* (See pages 12 – 23). Additional information can be found in the Government Relations section of the *Information Center* at www.alarm.org.

In addition to Capitol Hill visits and legislative briefings, attendees were treated to a dinner reception in the U.S. Capitol building and a private tour of the Capitol complex.

Attendees were guided into the U.S. Capitol building on May 1. They were met inside by Arcuri and his staff who thanked NBFAA for supporting the development of a grant program designed to assist long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes, assisted living centers and

hospices, to have life safety and fire alarm systems professionally installed.

The following evening, attendees were given a special tour of the Capitol complex by Ron Sarasin, president of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society. The former congressman from Connecticut led the group to places within the Capitol rarely seen by the public. They walked through the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate where they were able to view the art and exhibits displayed there, as well as the proceedings on the House floor. The U.S. Capitol Historical Society is a non-profit organization that promotes the education and history of the U.S. Capitol and Congress.

While members on the tour did have to pass through metal detectors before entering the capitol building, they were never asked for identification or asked about their nationality.

“It was amazing to me, that in this day and age of terrorist threats, that our government’s doors are still open to everyone, no matter where they’re from. I think this is a great testament to our country’s commitment to freedom,” said Harvey Clark, president of the Connecticut Alarm & Systems Integrators Association.

“We were very successful in getting the word out on our legislation and NBFAA’s positions on those issues,” Chwat concluded. “We plan to build on this experience in 2008 when the second annual *Day on Capitol Hill* will take place. Our hope is that more company representatives will join us and we can further expand the collective voice of the association’s members.” □

“My overall impression was that we had a message that has strong bipartisan interest. Regardless if I was speaking to Democratic, Republican, Senate or House staff, all were interested in the messages I was delivering. Clearly, every one of us can make a difference if we make the effort.”

**Isaac Papier
Honeywell Life Safety**

