



FORT WORTH CONGRESSIONAL SUMMIT 2004

HIGHLIGHTS

A delegation of twenty-three business and community leaders traveled to Washington, D.C. on March 29, 2004 to participate in the three-day Fort Worth Congressional Summit hosted by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. The Summit program, consisting of a series of top-level meetings, briefings and networking receptions, is summarized below:

Texas Office of State-Federal Relations Briefing

Texas Office of State-Federal Relations (OSFR) Executive Director, **Ed Perez** was the keynote speaker at a luncheon on March 29. His comments addressed the history, organization, function and priorities of OSFR. As the State of Texas' primary advocacy organization in Washington, D.C., OSFR is focusing its current efforts on five priority public policy issue areas – health and human services funding and flexibility, transportation reauthorization and appropriations, defense and homeland security funding, higher education, and restoration of the sales tax deduction. Mr. Perez discussed the status of each of these issues as well as current Congressional and Administration activity on other major issues of interest to Fort Worth employers, including the Energy Bill and BRAC. Associate Director, David Pagan, accompanied Mr. Perez.

United States Department of Transportation Briefing

Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, **Jeffery Shane** briefed the delegation on the US DOT's national transportation policy agenda, the current Congressional debate on transportation funding (TEA 21 reauthorization), the Administration's position on reauthorization, and other transportation issues impacting the Fort Worth area. Mr. Shane is the principal policy advisor to the Secretary of Transportation, with oversight responsibility for the Office of Transportation Policy and the Office of Aviation and International Affairs. Secretary Shane's comments focused on US DOT efforts to improve highway safety and reduce traffic congestion. Specifically, he addressed Private Activity Bonds allowing for \$15 billion in tax exempt financing over 6 years, intermodal freight connectors, maritime policy (SEA 21), and aviation safety and air traffic congestion (Vision 100). Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Associate Administrator, Chip Nottingham, US DOT Counselor, Michael O'Malley and Mike Reynolds accompanied Secretary Shane.

International Partners Reception

On Monday evening, March 29, the delegation convened at the **Embassy of Canada** for the 2004 International Partners Reception. This event, designed to bring together local leaders and key officials in the Washington D.C. international community, was well attended by the diplomatic community as well as U.S. Government officials. **Rhonda Newman Keenum**, nominee, Assistant Secretary and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service at the U.S. Department of Commerce was the keynote speaker. The U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service is the federal government's primary export promotion agency to markets worldwide. Keenum's remarks left the delegation optimistic about the future for increased trade and commerce. The International Partner's Reception was one of Keenum's first public appearances in her new role and consequently offered the first opportunity for many in the Washington D.C. international community to meet her. Because this agency's work is highly relevant to the efforts of local companies such as Lockheed Martin, Bell Helicopter, Aero Components and Jackson Walker, Keenum's involvement was significant. Notable among other reception attendees was high-level representation from the National Council of International Visitors, the United States Advocacy Center, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (international sec.), Meridian International, and embassies representing the Joint Strike Fighter (F22) nations as well as Fort Worth Sister City nations.

Breakfast with U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison

Senator Hutchison was the keynote speaker at breakfast on March 30. The Senator emphasized that the war on terror is the most important federal priority and that increased spending on defense and security is necessary. Senator Hutchison discussed TEA 21 reauthorization, her Border and Corridor Fund amendment, and the importance of increasing Texas' rate of return to 100%. She discussed negotiations on the pending Energy Bill, which could provide incentives for Gulf of Mexico drilling and allow for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) oil and gas exploration. The Senator also spoke about other issues important to Fort Worth including the need to address gang-related crime, expanding public transit (both regional rail and bus service), and Tower 55 improvements. Senator Hutchison emphasized the importance of AMTRAK passenger rail service to tourism and economic development in Fort Worth. She urged the Fort Worth Chamber to make AMTRAK funding and service a priority. She also discussed health care reform in the context of proposed medical malpractice reforms and health care consortiums. Harley Walsh, Legislative Director, James Christoferson, Legislative Assistant and Texann Chance accompanied Senator Hutchison. Following the breakfast, tours of the U.S. Capitol and the Senate gallery conducted by Senator Hutchison's staff were offered as an option for Summit participants.

Meeting with U.S. Representative Michael Burgess

Congressman Burgess discussed several of his top priority policy issues that are currently pending in the 108th Congress. Dr. Burgess stressed the importance of increased federal transportation funding to the Fort Worth/Dallas Metroplex. In his role as a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee, Congressman Burgess is directly involved in negotiations between the House, Senate and Administration on various elements of the TEA 21 reauthorization bill including the amount of overall funding and increasing the rate of return to Texas. He discussed his proposed RAPID Act relating to tolling and multimodal transportation projects and funding for Tower 55 improvements. Congressman Burgess also emphasized his support for “association health plans” and health care savings accounts. Randi Reed, Legislative Director, accompanied Congressman Burgess.

Lunch with U.S. Representative Kay Granger

Congresswoman Kay Granger was the keynote speaker at lunch on March 30 where she provided an overview of her policy priorities that are pending before the 108th Congress. Transportation issues including federal funding reauthorization (TEA LU), the RAPID Act (I-35W toll lanes), Tower 55 improvements, Texas’ rate of return, and the transportation elements of the “Trinity River Vision” project are top priorities. The Congresswoman reported that she is actively supporting program funding for the V 22 Osprey, F 22 and F 35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft. She reported on a special Military Procurement Working Group that is advocating funding for several key defense programs. BRAC 2005 is a top priority and she believes that NAS JRB Fort Worth is well positioned as a model joint military training base. The Trinity River Vision project, another top priority, will create a new town lake on the north side of downtown Fort Worth. She emphasized the cooperation between the City of Fort Worth, Tarrant County and the Water District that is allowing this project to move forward. She also credited U.S. Senator John Cornyn for his support of the Trinity River Vision project. Other priority issues include addressing the high cost of health care, the pending Energy Bill and the MTBE fuel additive controversy, and the Sales Tax Equity Act allowing for a sales tax deduction in the IRS code. Barrett Carr, Chief of Staff, and Pat Svacina, Public Information Director, accompanied Congresswoman Granger. Following the luncheon, a guided tour of the U.S. Library of Congress was offered as an option for participants.

Meeting with U.S. Senator John Cornyn

Senator Cornyn reviewed his policy priorities for the 108th Congress. At the top of his agenda are issues related to security. He discussed those issues in two contexts – economic security and homeland security. Senator Cornyn also commented on the Congressional process to complete the FY 2005 federal budget. The Administration recently submitted to Congress a proposed budget that will be debated and amended as it moves through both houses of Congress. A top priority in the Administration’s budget and one supported by Senator Cornyn is an emphasis on increased investment in defense. Senator Cornyn also commented on his support for a proposed prescription drug benefit

bill that will benefit senior citizens. Amy Maldonado, Assistant for State Projects, addressed the group following Senator Cornyn's remarks. She reviewed a range of additional Congressional policy issues that are pending that may have an impact on Fort Worth. Katherine Bloemendal, Counsel, accompanied Senator Cornyn.

Meeting with U.S. Representative Joe Barton

Representative Barton, chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, spoke about the pending Energy Bill that has been stalled in the Senate since November 2003. He commented on his efforts to move the legislation forward through negotiations with the White House, the Secretary of Energy, House and Senate members and others. Representative Barton discussed one of his amendments to the Energy Bill that would authorize the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to consider upwind sources of air pollution (transport) when establishing attainment dates for non-attainment areas without approved State Implementation Plans. He emphasized the importance of this amendment to the Fort Worth/Dallas area as the EPA transitions from the 1-hour ozone air pollution standard to the more stringent 8-hour standard. Congressman Barton also emphasized his support for Lockheed's F 22 and F 35 (JSF) programs and Bell Helicopter's V 22 program.

Meeting with U.S. Representative Martin Frost

Congressman Frost discussed the outcome of the 2003 Congressional redistricting process that resulted in his former Congressional district being redrawn so that he would no longer be representing portions of Fort Worth and Tarrant County. However, he stated his continued direct interest and commitment to the projects and issues that are important to his former constituents in Fort Worth. He specifically mentioned his ongoing support for defense related programs impacting Fort Worth. Congressman Frost also commented on his attention to regional Metroplex issues including transportation funding and air quality compliance.

Texas Celebration Reception

The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and honorary co-hosts U.S. Senators Cornyn and Hutchison and U.S. Representatives Barton, Burgess, Frost and Granger hosted a reception honoring the members and staff of the Texas U.S. Congressional delegation. The reception, held this year in the Russell Senate Office Building and catered by Fort Worth's Railhead Smokehouse restaurant, continues to be a popular, recurring event of the Fort Worth Congressional Summit. Texas Congressional members attended the reception and received Fort Worth mementos in recognition of their service. Key Congressional staff members representing most of Texas' Congressional offices also attended.

U.S. Department of Defense Briefing

Pete Geren, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, welcomed the group and introduced the Secretary of the U.S. Navy, **Gordon England**. Secretary England emphasized the importance of local constituents staying involved in the national policy-making process. He commented that federal political/policy circumstances are constantly changing and that the chamber must be constantly vigilant as it works with members of Congress and the Executive branch on policy issues. Secretary England discussed the growing importance of air defense to the U.S. Navy. He commented on the value of the F 35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), the F 16 and the V 22 Osprey programs to the military services and to the Fort Worth economy. Secretary England discussed the international cooperation that enhances the stability of these programs. Regarding BRAC, he remarked that the process is in its early stages and predicting outcomes is premature. Secretary England commented that the BRAC process is being driven by financial and operational priorities. He noted the importance of NAS JRB FW as a successful example of joint military training, a top priority in the formal BRAC criteria. **Peter Verga**, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, discussed the distinction between homeland security and homeland defense. He emphasized the cooperation that exists between DoD and the Department of Homeland Security to prevent, defend against and respond to threats to the U.S. homeland. He discussed the global war on terror in the context of support for homeland security programs. He also commented on the restructuring of the U.S. Northern Command and its combination of land, air and maritime commands. **Pete Totochaney**, Principal Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, discussed the BRAC process and its potential impact on military installations nationwide. Mr. Totochaney discussed the BRAC timeline and the various government entities that are taking part in the development and collection of data and information that will become the basis for BRAC decisions. He reported that government-owned-company-operated (GOCO) facilities are subject to the BRAC review process. He also stated that the Secretary of Defense is considering a base restructuring process for overseas installations and that that process will inform the domestic BRAC 2005 process. A guided tour of the Pentagon was available as an optional activity for Summit participants.

U.S. Department of the Treasury Bureau of Engraving and Printing Briefing

Kit Ragone, Associate Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) Washington, D.C. Facility delivered welcoming remarks and introduced **Dawn Haley**, Chief, Office of External Affairs, Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Ms. Haley provided a briefing on the external functions of the BEP including governmental relations and educational programs. She reported that the House approved legislation on March 25, 2004 that would allow the BEP to contract with foreign entities to print currency and other products at U.S. facilities of BEP. The legislation is awaiting

action in the Senate Banking Committee. Because of expansion opportunities at the BEP Western Currency Facility, Fort Worth could be the beneficiary of employment and facility growth if the proposed foreign currency legislation is adopted. **Charlene Williams**, Deputy Associate Director and Chief Operating Officer, Bureau of Engraving and Printing Western Currency Facility, presented a comprehensive overview of the products and services of the BEP. She reviewed the history of the Western Currency Facility in Fort Worth that opened in 1991. Ms. Williams' presentation provided a detailed explanation of the design and function of the new Western Currency Facility Visitors' Center to be opened to the public in Fort Worth on April 26, 2004. The Visitors' Center grand opening will coincide with the announcement of the new design of the U.S. \$50 bill. She encouraged Fort Worth community and corporate leaders to attend the grand opening activities. A guided tour of the Washington D.C. currency production facility and Visitors' Center was offered to Summit participants.