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IMPACT 2014: IPC on Capitol Hill “Leadership in Promoting a Strong Manufacturing Economy”

by John Vaughan
CIRCUIT SOLUTIONS LLC

Note: The views expressed in the following recap of the IPC IMPACT 2014 event held on June 10–11 are solely my own. In keeping with IPC’s long-standing commitment to open dialogue by and between its members, no direct quotes or personal views from any IPC members are referenced in this article.

Although I am a Washington, D.C. native and reside in the D.C. suburbs, I must admit it was difficult not to get excited in advance about spending two days in downtown Washington on Capitol Hill at IMPACT 2014, talking circuit boards with both politicians and my industry peers alike!

As an industry, we face many challenges and obstacles in our pathway to success and IPC’s IMPACT 2014 offered the opportunity to meet key members of Congress, policymakers and influencers, educate them about needed actions to strengthen the electronics sector and the overall economy and national security, and network with industry colleagues.

IPC delivered superbly on all accounts.

I last attended IPC Capitol Hill Day in 2011, and while that was an outstanding event as well, it was clear this time around that IPC had redoubled its commitment to public policy engagement. In January of this year, IPC’s Government Relations and Environmental Policy office



Figure 1: IPC executives meet with President Obama’s senior advisor on manufacturing policy and offer support for the NNMI.



Figure 2: IPC executive luncheon with Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH), an IPC champion!

moved from its former Arlington, Va. location into the heart of DC. This prestigious Pennsylvania Avenue location is just blocks away from both the White House and Capitol Hill. No big surprise, as a government outreach and member advocacy presence here clearly pays dividends. This was reflected in the steady stream of high-level meetings with senators, representatives, and White House staffers that the IPC Government Relations team arranged for our IPC member delegation.

The lawmakers our group met with included: Neil Bradley, Deputy Chief of Staff for House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA); Senator Tom Udall (D-NM); Senator Rob Portman (R-OH); Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX); Senator John Cornyn (R-TX); Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) and Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH).

The key messaging delivered by our IPC member company executives' contingent was structured around three interconnecting themes: supporting national security through cutting-edge defense electronics; advocating for smart regulatory reforms; and promoting technological innovation and manufacturing. These key themes were expressed in detail as follows:

Advancing Technological Innovation and Manufacturing

- Manufacturing in the U.S. has contracted significantly in the last 20 years, while manu-

facturing has grown in other parts of the world. IPC's member companies in the U.S. seek a level global playing field

- The U.S. government must support domestic innovation and manufacturing, including authorization and funding for the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI)
- IPC supports comprehensive tax reform, including permanent extension of the R&D tax credit and lower tax rates for businesses
- IPC supports comprehensive immigration reform that increases the number of H-1B and L-1 visas, as part of developing and maintaining a skilled 21st century workforce for innovation and economic growth in the U.S.

Advocating for Smart Regulation

- IPC supports legislative and federal agency efforts, including the House-passed Regulatory Accountability Act (H.R. 2122) to reform the regulatory process to prevent government over-regulation that harms U.S. electronics companies in the global marketplace.

- IPC backs science-based environmental regulations, including:
 - Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) reform that preempts a patchwork of state laws, exempts byproducts sent for recycling from unnecessarily burdensome reporting requirements, and regulates chemicals in articles only when necessary

– A Definition of Solid Waste (DSW) rule that facilitates and encourages the recycling of valuable materials consistent with the intent of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

- IPC supports SEC guidance and regulations that will lessen the burden of conflict minerals regulations without undermining the underlying goals of Section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act. IPC encourages the SEC to utilize the notice and comment process to implement changes in the SEC conflict minerals rule necessitated by the recent court decision that found portions of the rule unconstitutional.

Safeguarding National Security Export Controls

- Printed boards must be subject to the same ITAR controls as the military electronics for which they are designed

- The release of ITAR printed boards to foreign individuals undermines national security; printed boards reveal highly sensitive information about the workings of the military electronics for which they are designed

- IPC supports export control reform and the publication of a final Category XI rule that clearly enumerates printed boards without relying on the use of the term “specially designed”

- Controlling printed boards by use of the term “specially designed” unnecessarily perpetuates longstanding confusion about the uniquely designed nature of all printed boards

Defense Cuts

- Maintaining a strong domestic printed board industry is critical to the nation’s defense industrial base and national security

- Sustained federal budget reductions weaken the defense industrial base by undermining the solvency of a domestic supply chain responsible for America’s 21st century military technologies

Executives attending from IPC member companies included: Steve Betza (corporate director of Advanced Manufacturing and Development, Lockheed Martin); Bob Black (president and CEO of Juki Automation Systems); Jack Calderon (managing director at Lincoln International



Figure 3: IPC executives voicing our views on key priorities in a meeting with Senator Mark Warner (D-VA).



Figure 4: IPC executives meet with Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) in the Capitol to press industry legislative priorities.

LLC); Everett Frank (vice president of Optimum Design); Dr. Brent Grazman (vice president of quality at Viasystems); Richard Lies (CEO of Chemcut Corporation); Jason Marsh (vice president for product management at Insulectro); Bhawmesh Mathur (president and CEO of Creation Technologies); Joe O’Neil (president of Hunter Technology Corp.); Marc Peo (president of Heller Industries); Carsten Salewski (CEO of Viscom Vision Technology); Ray Sharpe (president and CEO of Isola); Matt Turpin (president and CEO of Zentech Manufacturing); John Vaughan (president of Circuit Solutions LLC); Mikel Williams (president and CEO of JPS Industries); Mark Wolfe (director of supply chain management at John Deere Electronic Solutions); and Jim Woodbridge (vice president for government affairs, DoD Programs for SAIC).

The group meetings were followed by one-on-one meetings with representatives and their key staffers. This gave individual IPC member company executives the opportunity to meet with the offices of the representatives for their

respective geographical locations and to provide more detail and granularity on our collective issues. The door is now open for many of us and the relationships that were formed can prove valuable, for both the member companies and the IPC, if properly nurtured over time.

“Every time I attend this event, I walk away with a renewed appreciation of the value of our government relations efforts,” said John Mitchell, president and CEO of IPC. “Our meetings with senior leaders at the White House and on Capitol Hill give us a chance to educate them about our industry and the policies needed to maintain a strong electronics sector. We are grateful to the executives who attended and to the policy makers who met with us, and we will continue to work at growing these relationships and advocating for our industry.”

From the two days filled with highlights, two stand out in my mind.

The first was our IPC Executive Luncheon with Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH). Congressman Johnson made it easy to believe in America—

and in American manufacturing, again. He delivered an impassioned and patriotic keynote that touched upon the inner workings of the legislative body, the importance of electronics manufacturing to the United States, and the importance of both smart regulation and national security as it pertains to our industry. Congressman Johnson had us all ready to high five each other and run through brick walls. Thank you, sir.

Second was our closing meeting, held just off the West Wing of the White House in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB) with Jason Miller, Special Assistant to the President for Manufacturing Policy. This meeting was special because of both the importance of the message we delivered and for the venue. Steeped in history, our meeting was held in the War Secretaries Suite of the EEOB. The IPC messaging detailing our support for the NNMI was delivered by IPC President John Mitchell and Steve Betza of Lockheed Martin. To date, four regional innovation hubs known as Institutes for Manufacturing Innovations (IMIs) have been launched, with Lockheed Martin as a tier one participant in all four. As Lockheed's corporate director of advanced manufacturing and development, Betza is extraordinarily well-versed on the topic and there was an excellent exchange of thoughts and ideas with Mr. Miller. There is an active request for information (RFI) to industry by the DoD. The purpose of the RFI is to solicit input from industry and academia that the DoD will consider as part of an effort to select and scope the technology focus area for future IMIs hubs. The DoD is requesting responses that will assist in the selection of a technology focus area from those currently under construction, based upon evidence of national security requirement, economic benefit, technical opportunity, relevance to industry, business case for sustainability and workforce challenge.

The technical focus areas currently under consideration are: flexible hybrid electronics, photonics, engineered nanomaterials, fiber textiles, electronic packaging and reliability, and aerospace composites.

To ensure the messaging that IPC delivered on Capitol Hill resounds in the future, IPC

is also forming a political action committee (PAC). As outlined by John Hasselman, IPC's VP for government relations, "PACs have become an important tool for any group that wants to be heard when laws and regulations are written. Given the growing number of government regulations that influence the electronics supply chain, having a stronger voice in Washington, D.C. is something that can no longer be ignored."

IPC's PAC will support federal candidates for office that advocate for policies that support the growth of electronics manufacturing, and will help raise IPC's visibility with policy makers and other key influencers in Washington. As IPC continues to raise its profile, key members of Congress and administration officials are learning about the needs of our industry and the work IPC is doing. We need to continue to engage at a political and policy level and educate them on issues important to the success of our members. In a call to action, I would highly encourage IPC member company executives to consider participating in the PAC. For more detailed information about the PAC and other IPC's government relations activities, please contact Hasselmann at johnhasselmann@ipc.org.

In closing, IPC IMPACT 2014 was an outstanding event that provided each attendee with an insider view of the issues that impact our industry, our nation's political process, and IPC's extraordinary advocacy of our industries' position on these issues. IMPACT 2014 exceeded all of my expectations. The hope from here is that additional IPC member companies' executives will plan to attend next year's event and make a continued impact in Washington, DC on behalf of IPC members in the United States. **PCB**



John Vaughan is president of Circuit Solutions LLC, based in the Washington D.C. Metro Military market and providing integrated supply chain and program management solutions to the military C4ISR, Unmanned Systems and IED detect and defeat communities. To reach Vaughan, or to read past columns, [click here](#).