

2015 Legislative Fly-In

The 2015 ASCE Legislative Fly-in was a great success, with nearly every state sending at least one delegate and totaling more than 200 attendees. The Fly-in was an intense two day event held on March 24th and 25th, 2015. The Alabama Section sent a delegation of four people from the Birmingham and Montgomery Branch consisting of **Dr. Ed Segner, Mr. Ben Gallager, Ms. Shelia Montgomery-Mills, and Mr. Brad Williams**. The delegation had an opportunity to meet with the Staff of Senator Richard Shelby, Senator Jeff Sessions, Representative Terri Sewell, Representative Gary Palmer and Representative Martha Roby.



On Tuesday, March 24th the delegates spent a day learning about the issues that we would focus on, and then we developed our specific message around how the issues affect our individual state. Thanks to help from several members of the Report Card for Alabama's Infrastructure, we were armed with lots of supporting information for each of the issues. On Wednesday, March 25th, we went to the Capital and the footrace began! The ASCE Government Relations staff scheduled meetings for each of us with our senate and congressional representatives within a 5 hour window. Most meetings were very productive and lasted around 30 to 45 minutes. Even though we were not able to see any of the representatives, we had very informative meetings with the Staff and provided each one of them with a leave behind packet. This packet provided the legislators with an overview of the issues and ASCE's position so that they could review it upon returning from the Senate or Congressional Floor.

The three items that were discussed at the Fly-in were:

1. Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA)

- a. We thanked each representatives for their part in passing the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) in 2014, and asked for their help in funding/appropriating the bill.
- b. WRRDA:
 - i. Establishes a National Levee Safety Program
 - ii. Reauthorizes the National Dam Safety Program
 - iii. Increase revenues for the Inland Waterways Trust Fund
 - iv. Restores Trust in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, by ensuring all funds collected are actually utilized for maintenance of harbors.

2. Fixing the Highway Trust Fund: Surface Transportation Reauthorization

- a. We urged Alabama's Representatives to complete work on a multi-year reauthorization bill for the Nation's Surface Transportation Programs and to identify a long-term funding solution for the federal Highway Trust Fund which expires on May 31, 2015. We also discussed the deterrent to construction projects for not having a long-term plan similar to MAP-21 and SAFETEA-LU.

3. Fixing the Highway Trust Fund

- a. We urged Alabama's Legislators to support the Update, Promote, and Develop America's Transportation Essentials Act (UPDATE Act), legislation which would raise the federal motor fuels tax rate by fifteen cents per gallon over the course of three years and index the future rate to inflation. The last time the motor fuels user fee was raised was 1993 to the rate of 18.4 cents per gallon. Since that time, due to inflation, the purchasing power has decrease by over one-third.

This was the best Fly-in for Alabama delegates in years! Having multiple people, each one could focusing on an issue while the others able to fill in additional points, made the meetings much more effective and informative. We all believe we made an impact and looking forward to an opportunity to return next year. Maybe you can join us!

For more information concerning the Fly-In please visit http://www.asce.org/legislative_fly-in/