
Washington Report



Help Shape the WMMA's 2017 Public Policy Agenda By Rich Christianson



The WMMA Public Policy Committee (PPC) has a long and rich legacy of monitoring and lobbying for members' interests in Washington, DC. Among the issues the committee has recently tackled include Direct Expensing, Career and Technical Education, the Department of Labor's Overtime Rule and Combustible Dust.

The WMMA PPC values member input and guidance in preparation for a pair of major lobbying events in 2017:

- **WMMA Fly-in, Feb. 15-16.** The event will include scheduled visits by PPC members to meet with their representatives and senators.
- **NAM Manufacturing Summit, June 20-21.** The WMMA will participate in the National Manufacturer Association's annual sojourn to Capitol Hill.

The PPC respectfully requests a few minutes of your time to respond to a survey to help shape the committee's 2017 policy agenda. What are your company's major pain points? What should we ask our legislators to do that will help WMMA member companies be better and stronger competitors and job creators?

[**Take the Survey**](#)

Roundup: News, Notes & More



1,100 Manufacturers Pledge to Help Trump 'Rebuild Trust'

The day after his Nov. 8 election victory, Donald Trump received a letter signed by 1,100 manufacturing executives lending their support to the president-elect and the 115th Congress. That same letter, initiated by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), would have gone to Hilary Clinton if she had won.

Jay Timmons, president and CEO of NAM, explained the intent of the letter. "Manufacturing and business leaders from across the country have pledged to rebuild trust in our democratic and economic institutions so that we can ensure our exceptional country offers abundant opportunity to all."

"Regardless of political party affiliation, the president of the United States deserves the respect of all Americans, and for the sake of our country, manufacturers want our next president to stand tall on the world stage and stand up for America's entrepreneurs;" Timmons added. "We will do our part, sharing our ideas and our expertise with President-elect Trump and the 115th Congress to lead by example and set a productive tone for this next chapter in our nation's history. At the same time, we will celebrate and defend the values that make our nation great; chief among those are free enterprise, competitiveness, individual liberty and equal opportunity. Manufacturers expect our newly elected leaders to worry less about the powerful political extremes and concern themselves solely with solutions that will lift all Americans up and leave no one behind."

These solutions, which the NAM will lay out in detail over the next several weeks, must be the focus of our policymakers if we truly want to see widespread growth and prosperity in this country.”

[Read The Letter](#)



Court Delays New Overtime Rule

U.S. District Judge Amos Mazzant of Sherman, TX, put the brakes on the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Overtime Rule just 10 days before it was to go into effect.

Mazzant ordered a nationwide injunction of the controversial rule that beginning Dec. 1 would have extended mandatory overtime pay to 4.2 million workers making up to \$47,476 per year. The current cutoff for automatic overtime for salaried workers is \$23,360. According to Fortune, the judge, an appointee of President Barack Obama, ruled that the federal law governing overtime does not allow the Labor Department to decide which workers are eligible based on salary levels alone.

The Manufacturers’ Center for Legal Action, an arm of the National Association of Manufacturers, was joined by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 21 states and other business groups in filing a lawsuit Sept. 20 to block implementation of the DOL overtime rule.

The DOL could file an appeal to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. Even if successful appeal, the Overtime Rule could be axed by Donald Trump after he is sworn in as president. Trump could use the Congressional Review Act to nullify the rule, the same power that President George W. Bush wielded to kill the Clinton Administration’s Ergonomics Rule upon taking office in 2001.

Linda Kelly, senior vice president and general counsel for the National Association of Manufacturers, said, “The Manufacturers’ Center for Legal Action is the last line of defense from unreasonable regulations that harm not just job growth but also manufacturers’ ability to stay in business. Today’s decision is an important win for all manufacturers in America — halting what would have been a dramatic and devastating change in labor law that manufacturers could not afford. The rule would have vastly expanded the number of employees that would be eligible for overtime. The decision brings us a step closer to curbing regulations that have resulted in \$80 billion in compliance costs and more than 25 million hours of paperwork.”

The court injunction does not address measures many businesses have already taken to comply with the Overtime Rule. They include raising employee salaries above the \$47,476 threshold or reclassifying

employees from salary to hourly.

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U.S. Hardwood Plywood Makers File New Antidumping Petition

The Coalition for Fair Trade of Hardwood Plywood (CFTHP) is taking a second shot at getting relief from imported Chinese hardwood plywood that it says is being dumped on the U.S. market at prices below fair market value. The coalition recently filed an antidumping petition with the U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. International Trade Commission.

The CFTHP assert Chinese hardwood plywood manufacturers receive illegal government subsidies, including tax breaks and discounted land and raw materials.

In a press release, the coalition stated, "The import data clearly demonstrates that Chinese hardwood plywood imports have increased significantly from 2013 to 2015, and that Chinese imports have taken market share directly from the U.S. hardwood plywood industry. China's actions present a fundamental obstacle to U.S. manufacturers of hardwood plywood products, and if not remedied, thousands of hard-working Americans will lose their jobs."

"It's pretty clear that we're kind of in a death spiral right now," said HPVA President Kip Howlett.

The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) voted 5-0 in 2013 that hardwood plywood imported from China does not injure the U.S. industry, thus rejecting an antidumping petition filed by the coalition. In June, U.S. Judge Richard Eaton of the U.S. Court of International Trade remanded the 2013 decision to the ITC.

[Read More](#)



Forest Service Survey Counts 102M Dead Trees in California

The U.S. Forest Service says it identified an additional 36 million dead trees in its May aerial survey, bringing the total of dead trees to more than 102 million since 2010 in the drought stricken Sierra Nevada region of California.

"These dead and dying trees continue to elevate the risk of wildfire, complicate our efforts to respond safely and effectively to fires when they do occur, and pose a host of threats to life and property across California," said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "USDA has made restoration work and the removal of excess fuels a top priority, but until Congress passes a permanent fix to the fire budget, we can't break this cycle of diverting funds away from restoration work to fight the immediate threat of the large unpredictable fires caused by the fuel buildups themselves."

[Read More](#)

Voters Raise Minimum Wage in Four States

The minimum wage will rise in Arizona, Colorado, Maine and Washington following respective ballot measures passed by voters in the Nov. 8 election.

The minimum hourly wage in Arizona, Colorado, and Maine will see advance to \$12 an hour by 2020; workers in Washington will see the starting pay rate increase to \$13.50 by 2020. Meanwhile, a referendum seeking to lower the minimum wage for workers under the age of 18 was defeated.

[Read The Atlantic's Report](#)

The federal minimum wage has stood at \$7.25 since July 24, 2009. In April 2015, Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced the Raise the Wage Act (S. 1150) which would incrementally raise the federally

OSHA Targets Four States to Reduce Amputation Injuries

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced a "heightened focus" to reduce workplace amputation injuries in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. OSHA's targeted enforcement stage includes on-site inspections and a review of employers in industries with machinery that exposes workers to amputation hazards. Federal safety and health inspectors will evaluate operations, working conditions, recordkeeping and safety and health programs to ensure compliance.

Kelly Knighton, regional administrator for OSHA, said, "We can only hope that the focus on this issue will reduce the potential for continued worker exposure to unguarded machines and equipment." [Read more.](#)

mandated minimum wage to \$12 over a four-year period. Murray's bill and an identical companion bill introduced by Rep. Robert Scott (D-VA), have stalled in committee.

[Read More About The Bill](#)

News Report: Trump Would Include Softwood Lumber in Recrafting NAFTA

Canadian softwood lumber, long a thorn in the side of U.S. and Canadian trade relations, could be rolled into a new NAFTA deal, according to CBC News. The news agency said a purported leaked document from President-elect Donald Trump's transition team indicates that adding softwood lumber into NAFTA negotiations would put an end to the string of litigation between the two countries. The U.S. Department of Commerce issued a report in June documenting multiple government subsidies Canadian softwood lumber producers receive. A standstill period that extended the 2006 Softwood Lumber Agreement between the U.S. and Canada expired on Oct. 12. [Read more.](#)

Court to Consider Challenge to EPA's Clean Power Rule

A coalition led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers has a Feb. 16 date in federal appellate court to contest the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2015 ozone pollution standard. According to The Hill, the coalition charges that the EPA overstepped its authority in violation of the 2008 Clean Air Act in reducing the allowable concentration of ozone from 75 parts per billion to 70 parts per billion. [Read more.](#)

Overexertion Main Culprit of Work Injuries and Illnesses

"Overexertion and bodily reaction" was the leading major event or exposure resulting in 376,190 occupational injuries or illnesses or one third of total cases recorded in 2015. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2015 incidence rate - 33.9 per 10,000 full-time workers - pegged to fatigue declined from 35.6 recorded in 2014. The overall incidence rate of nonfatal occupational injury and illness cases requiring days away from work to recuperate was 104.0 cases per 10,000 full-time workers in 2015, down from 107.1 cases in 2014. That translates into 1,153,490 lost work days among all U.S. work sectors. [Read more.](#)

Commerce Department Touts Apprenticeship Programs

"The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeships: A Business Perspective," is a new report from the U.S. Department of Commerce. It was authored by the Economics and Statistics Administration in partnership with Case Western Reserve University to illustrate the value of apprenticeship programs from the employer perspective. "This first-of-its kind report clearly demonstrates the value apprenticeships deliver to companies by helping fill jobs left empty, creating a more productive work force, reducing turnover and lowering recruiting costs," said Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker. [Read more.](#)

Cited & Fined

Crystal Window & Door Systems PA LLC of Dalton, PA, was issued eight serious safety violations and fined \$74,826 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) following the report of an injury in which a worker's finger was amputated. Alleged violations include damaged electrical equipment, not established energy control program and unguarded machinery. [Read more.](#)



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