

For Immediate Release

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**AWFS® Concludes First Virtual DC Fly-In;
*Submits Nomination for National Apprenticeship Committee***

ANAHEIM, CA – April 5, 2021 -- Twelve members of the Association of Woodworking and Furnishings Suppliers® (AWFS®) Public Policy Committee and the wood industry called on the offices of twenty DC legislators and committee staff in March to encourage support for apprenticeships and workforce development legislation.

AWFS® is championing the approval of the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021 (HR447) because it expands opportunities for more apprenticeship and work-based learning, particularly for small and mid-sized companies. The Act “invests more than \$3.5 billion over 5 years in expanding opportunities and access to Registered Apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, and pre-apprenticeships.” It incorporates previous proposed legislation that AWFS has supported, such as the PARTNERS Act. The National Apprenticeship Act has already passed in the House and is now under review in the Senate. During the fly-in, AWFS urged Congress to pass the National Apprenticeship Act as quickly as possible and were thrilled to hear that it may be included in the upcoming infrastructure package.

AWFS® also advocated for the Relaunching America’s Workforce Act (HR602/S200) “which authorizes \$15 billion in funding over the next three years to help employers keep workers on the job and help displaced or underemployed workers quickly re-enter the workforce as the economy emerges from the pandemic.” This would include an investment of “\$1 billion in high-quality, work-based learning opportunities and career and technical education to prepare students for careers in high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and, \$2 billion to restart the community college career training grant program...and provide individuals with career pathways to high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand employment opportunities.”

Fly-In participants met with Senate and House offices on both sides of the aisle

In each virtual meeting during the 2021 fly-in, participants stressed our interest in developing long-term relationships with their representatives, inviting them to visit facilities in their districts in the future, and using AWFS as a resource on issues related to workforce development needs. The meetings allowed constituents to meet directly with their representatives and included the offices of Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA); Senator Rob Portman (R-OH); Congressman G.T. Thompson (R-PA), a longstanding champion of Career Technical Education and Co-Chair of the CTE Caucus; and Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), the author of the PARTNERS Act, among others.

In addition to individual Congressional Member offices, groups met with lead staff from the Senate HELP (Healthcare, Education, Labor and Pension) committee, which oversees career technical education and workforce development legislation, and staff from the House counterpart, the Education and Labor Committee. The committee meetings provided insight into the focus for these topics in the coming months.

Throughout the appointments, participants learned of the recent re-introduction of other acts that AWFS® has supported in the past: the JOBS Act from Sen. Rob Portman’s office, and the Skills Renewal Act from Rep. GT Thompson’s office. Meaningful conversations took place about how existing and future legislation can be more effectively executed at the state and local level. Federal policymakers appreciated hearing from business leaders about their experiences with legislative implementation.

“The fly-in is an excellent way to come together to communicate needs on behalf of our industry”, says AWFS® Public Policy Committee Chair Bob Brown. “We focus on workforce development and career technical education because these are bipartisan issues that are affecting so many small businesses within many industries, particularly ours. Exciting legislation is being introduced and the opportunities to access government resources for developing training and work-based learning will help wood manufacturers secure our future talent pipeline.”

Virtual Fly-In Experience was Effective

The “virtual fly-in” experience was new for everyone involved, except for the legislative offices who have operated entirely virtually for the past year. While it did not have the “excitement” of a traditional AWFS DC fly-in event, it was a productive experience and a straightforward process using Zoom software. AWFS’ advocacy agency Lobbyit organized the day and scheduled all appointments. Without having to schedule extra time to physically walk between offices, more appointments could be scheduled. Many of the same elements from an in-person fly-in carried over to the virtual environment, such as how to communicate our legislative message as a team and how to prepare and deliver follow-up communication and information.

AWFS® Nomination for Apprenticeship Committee

A highlight of the event was presenting AWFS’ nomination for the National Apprenticeship Committee, which would work with the Department of Labor to oversee elements of the National Apprenticeship Act. AWFS has recommended Kelly Victor-Burke, co-owner of Burke Architectural Millwork, to serve on the committee. Ms. Victor-Burke developed the DOL registered apprenticeship framework for “Wood Manufacturing Specialist” (WMS) and has the first WMS apprentice in her facility.

“I am honored by this nomination and would be happy to participate and share my insight and experience with apprenticeship in the committee,” says Ms. Victor-Burke. “Registered apprenticeships are a complex process but a very important aspect of work-based learning and if other companies in our industry are able to offer them, it will make a significant impact on our future workforce needs.”

AWFS® thanks the following Public Policy Committee and industry members for participating in the 2021 virtual DC fly-in:

- Bob Brown, Royal Plywood (and Chair, AWFS® Public Policy Committee)
- Thomas Allott, Stiles University
- Karl Frey, Colonial Saw
- Dave Golling, Royal Plywood
- Wade Gregory, WG Consulting
- Chris Hoffmann, Colonial Saw
- Saúl Martín, Architectural Woodworking Company
- Jeff Pitcher, CP Adhesives
- Christina Relyea, JB Cutting
- John Stearns, Amity (OR) School District

- Kelly Victor-Burke, Burke Architectural Millwork
- Cadence Joan Warr, CP Adhesives

See a summary of AWFS' 2021 fly-in message here: <https://www.awfs.org/public-policy/the-us-needs-a-skilled-workforce/>

Interested in learning more about AWFS® Public Policy efforts? Contact Education Director Adria Salvatore today! adria@awfs.org; (323) 215-0311

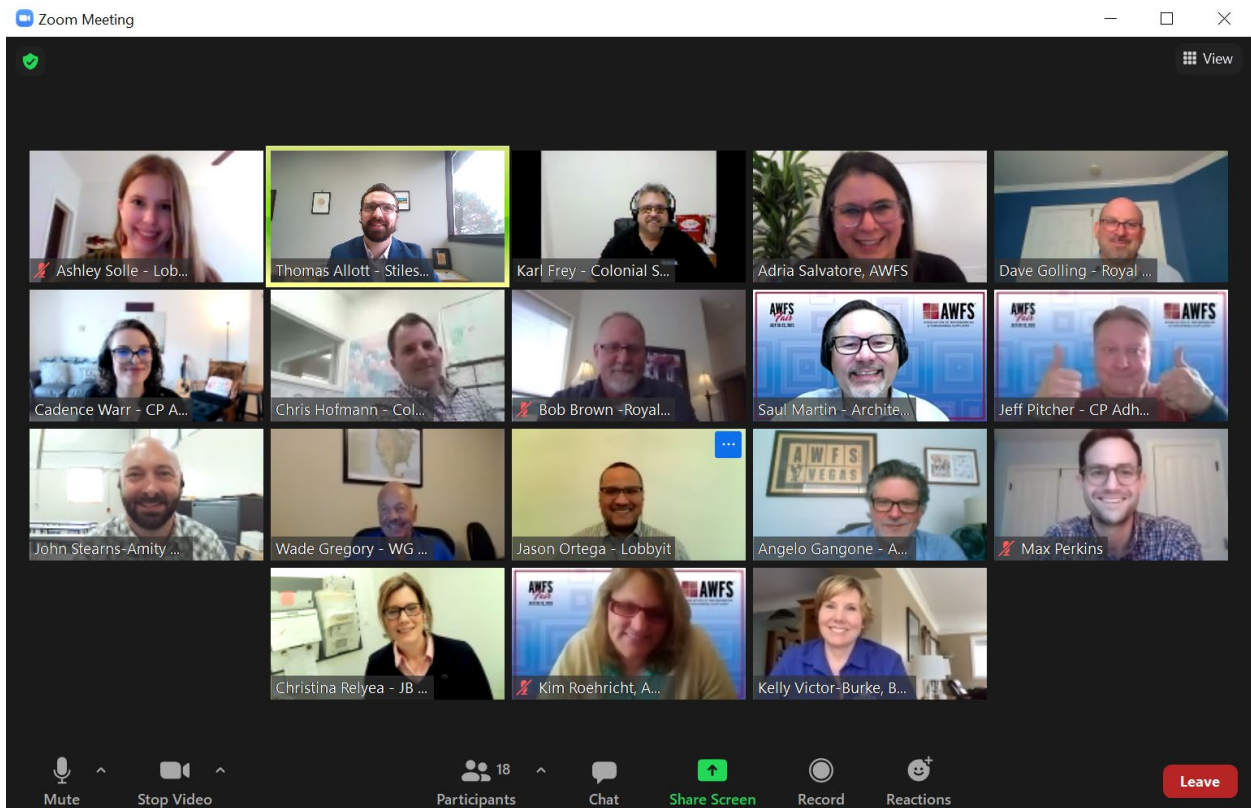


Image caption: Representatives from member companies and the wood industry participated in the first-ever AWFS Virtual DC Fly-In on March 25.

ABOUT AWFS®

The Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers® (AWFS®), founded in 1911, is a non-profit organization that wholly owns and produces the biennial AWFS® Fair. The largest trade association serving the entire home and commercial furnishings industry, AWFS has more than 400 members, including manufacturers and distributors of machinery, hardware, software, tooling, lumber, components, plastics, wood products and supplies for the woodworking industry including cabinet, furniture, millwork and custom woodworking products. To learn more, visit <http://www.awfs.org/>.