

Government Relations Update February 25, 2008

Chamber and Alliance support maple syrup producers

With the coming of spring hopefully just around the corner, so comes the maple syrup production season. One hurdle that Michigan's maple syrup producers have had to deal with is that their syrup production operations have been classified and taxed as a commercial operation, not as agricultural, making the cost of doing business even higher for these small production centers.

A four bill package has been introduced by four northern Michigan House members, Reps. Palsrok, Elsenheimer, Walker and Sheltroun, to change this classification. The bill package will classify the trees, sap gathering and syrup production equipment as agricultural items and require they be assessed accordingly. The bills are HB 5677-5680. The chamber and the Northwest Michigan Regional Chamber Alliance supported these bills in the House Agriculture Committee and can be viewed at www.mileg.org. Further action is anticipated soon.

Chamber meets Undersecretary of Commerce

While in Lansing this past week, I was able to sit in on a briefing from Undersecretary for International Trade with the Commerce Department, Mr. Christopher Padilla. He was in town as the guest of U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow to discuss trade enforcement, international competition and piracy.

A couple of web resources were highlighted for businesses seeking assistance. The first is www.export.gov, which is a country commercial guide for exporters and highlights countries that the United States does business. The other is www.stopfakes.gov, which is a resource for U.S. businesses who find that their product has been reproduced and being sold by a foreign company and how to take action against the imposter.

Great Lakes Compact - update

Committee testimony resumed on legislation addressing water withdrawal from the Great Lakes basin, known as the Great Lakes Compact. A hearing was held last week in the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee on the latest version of Senate Bill 860. The House Great Lakes and Environment Committee is slated to bring up a number of bills aimed at regulating water use this week as well. The proposed senate substitute for the bill is not yet available on www.mileg.org, as the committee has yet to report the substitute from committee, but could be as early as this week.