

A Return to Washington, D.C.



Photo: Architect of the Capitol

“There is no more powerful voice in the office of a member of the United States Senate or House of Representatives than that of a constituent,” said Charlie Garrison, President of The Garrison Group and lobbyist retained by National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ). “And that was never more clear than during the NAJ Constituent Day on Capitol Hill, June 25, during the AJCA-NAJ Annual Meetings.”

In conjunction with the Jersey convention in Alexandria, Virginia, NAJ organized a day trip to Capitol Hill. With advance registration by members and in collaboration with The Garrison Group, NAJ staff scheduled meetings for Jersey members with their Senators and Representative or their staffs in Congressional offices. Nearly 80 Jersey folks participated in the function, and over 70 Congressional offices were visited. For some in attendance these meetings were their first on Capitol Hill and with a Member of Congress or Congressional staff. Other people had been to The Hill multiple times and are on a first-name basis with their elected officials.

Regardless of previous experience, participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive and included many unique experiences. Jackson Moss, son of Kelly and Kathy Moss, AZ, got to place an actual vote on the House of Representatives floor under the direction of Representative Trent Franks. John Kokoski, MA, invited his Congressman, Richard Neal, to visit the

dairy during the August recess. Not only did Rep. Neal visit the farm, but he brought other government officials with him. Almost immediately following NAJ’s Constituent Day on Capitol Hill, the question began to be asked, “What do we do for a follow up?”

At the November meeting the NAJ board requested staff to prepare a proposal for a return trip to D.C. to coincide with the beginning of a new Congress in 2015. Earlier this month the NAJ board approved organizing a “fly-in” to meet with Members of Congress about the important issues facing agriculture in general and the dairy industry in particular. NAJ members are welcome and encouraged to participate in this event.

When: February 25 & 26, 2015, which is the week after Congress’s President’s Day recess.

Where: Holiday Inn, 550 C Street SW, Washington, D.C. This hotel is two blocks from Washington Mall and five blocks from The United States Capitol. The group room rate is \$229 per night, plus 14.5% tax. The location will eliminate the need to transport folks as a group by bus. If the weather is decent, most people will be able to walk to their meetings at the House and Senate office buildings. Otherwise cabs will be readily available. The hotel’s location also makes it easily accessible

to the many attractions around the Washington Mall.

Who: NAJ Board, AJCA Board and NAJ membership, supported by appropriate staff.

Why:

- A new Congress is set to begin work in January. The Republican Party holds a majority in both Houses and brings with it with new legislative priorities. The timing of the visit could be excellent as new legislation will be starting through the committee process at approximately the same time as NAJ members will be there. This point was amplified earlier this month at the Georgia Farm Bureau convention. Senator-Elect David Perdue (R-GA) spoke and remarked that he had attended two orientation meetings in D.C. since the election. The Republican leadership of the Senate listed their priorities as immigration reform, tax reform and regulatory relief. The new Congress will have about six months to pass major legislation because by mid-summer most political focus will turn to the 2016 Presidential election.
- To position Jersey owners and the Jersey organizations as resources for Members of Congress and their staffs on issues important to agriculture and dairy. A return visit will also show that last summer's function was not just a 'tourist activity', and that Jersey breeders are serious about being involved in the policy-making process.

Schedule: Participants should plan to travel to D.C. on Tuesday, February 24. An orientation breakfast will be held Wednesday including outside speakers on the issues to be covered. NAJ staff and Charlie Garrison will cover the logistics of navigating Capitol Hill and meetings with Members of Congress. The objective is to have each participant meet with both of their state's Senators and the House of Representative member from their district. Capitol Hill visits will start late morning and continue through late afternoon. Group meetings with the House and Senate leadership may be possible in addition to individual meetings with Members of Congress and their staffs. The evening will be free for dinner on your own. Thursday will start with another group breakfast, along with any Congressional meetings that could not be scheduled for Wednesday. Participants can plan to travel home Thursday.

NAJ members who want to participate in this conference should register with NAJ by sending an email to naj@usjersey.com by January 22. While there is no fee to attend, advance registration is needed in order for NAJ staff to work with Congressional staffs to schedule and coordinate office visits. Attendees will need to make their own travel and hotel reservations. Rooms at the Holiday Inn can be reserved by calling 1-877-572-6951 and asking for the J8C block of rooms. Hotel reservations may also be made online at <http://goo.gl/OX2PIK> using the promotion code J8C. For those flying to D.C., Reagan National Airport is just four miles from the hotel.

In June, NAJ members learned that they can be involved in legislative deliberations and build relationships with their elected officials. As a new Congress convenes and begins to tackle issues that will impact the dairy industry, the time is right for a return trip to the nation's capitol to express the dairy farmer's perspective.



The NAJ Equity Newsletter is Published for Supporters of and People Interested In Equitable Milk Pricing