



BUILDING TIES ON CAPITOL HILL AT THE 2006 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Friends in high places

Thirteen years after rent-to-own industry leaders staged their first legislative conference, nearly 50 APRO members and rental dealers returned to Washington, D.C., in February to share their enthusiasm for rent-to-own legislation with federal representatives. The 2006 Dave Egan Legislative Conference offered a new format—an educational morning seminar before Capitol Hill visits followed by an evening grassroots networking dinner—and record-breaking attendance. ▶ “I was extremely pleased with the format this year,” says APRO Government Relations Committee Chair John Raines. “So far, attendee response to the networking and instructional time has been positive.” ▶ The conference began on February 28 at the L’Enfant Plaza Hotel. ColorTyme CEO Robert Bloom kicked off the conference at the general session with a presentation reminding attendees that a positive attitude—believing in self, recognizing opportunities everywhere, persistence in focusing on solutions and always looking for the good in things—plays a key role in the success of one’s business and in the industry’s goals.



Clockwise from top left: APRO President Shannon Strunk, APRO Executive Director Bill Keese and ColorTyme’s Robert Bloom; Stephen Emmer and John Spangle; Robert Bloom; Gloria and Destinee Homeier-Schwien; Strunk with his granddaughter, Kaitlyn Wood; Strunk with Brenda, Larry and Darren Tinney; John Raines.

After the general session, attendees met with their representatives and senators on Capitol Hill in individual meetings. Their goal was to share an important rent-to-own message—that a federal rent-to-own transaction definition would benefit small business, the economy and the three million customers who use rent-to-own annually.

After a full day of work, attendees were treated to dinner at Top of the Town in Arlington, Virginia. The location provided a bird's-eye view of D.C.'s monuments and fostered a great deal of discussion about the productivity of the day's meetings. Following this networking event, attendees were taken on a "Washington After Dark" tour of famous capital sights.

On March 1, some dealers returned to Capitol Hill to conduct further meetings with representatives. A few took the time to meet at the hotel and plan the new format of the industry statistical survey in order to make sure this year's results provide the most pertinent and usable information for APRO's members.

The number of attendees increased over the 2005 legislative conference. Out of the nearly 50 participants, 11 were first-time attendees. "I am especially delighted with all of the 'new blood' working on APRO's legislative efforts," says Raines. "The new participants certainly

raised the enthusiasm of the whole group."

APRO also welcomed some special guests to this year's conference. While attendees came from far and wide, none came quite so far as Stephen Emmer. Emmer is an exchange student from Berlin, Germany, and is the house guest of John Spangle and his wife in Friendswood, Texas. "I wanted Stephen to experience the sights of our nation's capital as a part of his exchange experience," says Spangle. And APRO President Shannon Strunk isn't wasting any time introducing his and his wife, Cynthia's, granddaughter to the legislative process. Two-year-old Kaitlyn Wood went with her grandparents and mother, Lauren Wood, to meetings on Capitol Hill.

Whatever the age or nationality, one thing that attendees took away from this year's event is the importance of the legislative process. "An annual trip to Washington helps cement our ties on the Hill," says Raines. "I cannot stress how important it is for APRO members to develop relationships with their representatives and senators. Recently, longtime APRO member Gary Romine reminded me that 'you don't start looking for a friend when you need one. You better make friends ahead of time.'" ■

Compiled by Shellie Faught, Jeannie Hutchison and Richard May.

2006 Legislative Conference attendees

The following individuals generously gave of their time to come to Washington, D.C., and support the drive for federal rent-to-own definition legislation.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich Bartel, Regal RTO • Murray Beck, SKC Enterprises * • Terry Beville, Buddy's Home Furnishings • Robert Bloom, ColorTyme * • Jim and Debbie Brown, ABC Lease, Ownership and Sales for Less • Joe Burchfield and son, Jordy, Right Choice Rentals * • Sidney Burton, Hometown Ventures • Christopher Champion, Aaron's Sales and Lease Ownership * • "Tiger" John Cleek, Cleek's Rent-To-Own • John Cleek Jr., Cleek's Rent-To-Own * • Dan Cole, National Rent To Own • David P. David, Full-O-Pep Appliances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Eichlin, STAR Rentals • Stephen Emmer, guest of John Spangle * • Larry Goad, Zion Rental-Purchase * • Gloria Homeier-Schwien, A Full House * • Destinee Homeier-Schwien, A Full House * • Chris Kale, Rent King * • Terri Lacey, Crusader Rent To Own * • Lyn Leach, Ace Rent-To-Own • Jeff Lebakken, Lebakken's • Ernie Lewallen, UHR Rents • Jeff Loeb, RTO Inc. • Kevin and Angie Quinn, KLO Enterprises • John Raines, Aaron's Sales and Lease Ownership • Richard Rose, RTO Inc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Spangle, Partner's Rental Purchase • Shannon Strunk and Cynthia Baber-Strunk, Baber's Inc. • Wayne Sutton, Rent USA • Mike Talley, Talley Rents LLC, dba ColorTyme • Larry and Brenda Tinney, Royal Crown Leasing • Darren Tinney, Royal Crown Leasing • Doug Wills, RTO Inc.* • Mark Windsor, National TV Sales and Rental • Aaron Windsor, Rent Rite • Lauren Wood and daughter, Kaitlyn Wood, Gulf Coast L&P Inc., dba Rent-n-Roll * |
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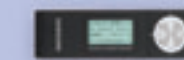
* First-time attendees

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