



The 109th Congress Goes Out With a Whimper—Here's to 2007!

In the wee hours of Saturday, December 8, the 109th Congress called it a wrap and left town. It left behind a lot of unfinished business, a lot of disappointment, and a lot of anger at its inaction and failure to accomplish much of anything. For surveyors, we've had many successes in either the House or the Senate but, unfortunately, we could not get the two bodies to agree on all parts of our legislation.

In 2005, we were able to get a version of a resolution honoring surveyors by recognizing National Surveyor's Week introduced in both the House and the Senate. The Senate's version of the resolution passed the Senate by unanimous consent in January 2006. The House's version of the resolution was sent to the Government Reform Committee for consideration. The Government Reform Committee has a rule that there must be 50 co-sponsors on a bill or resolution before it can be brought up for consideration before the full House of Representatives.

Through the hard work of ACSM members we were able to get 43 co-sponsors on the resolution. The powers that be refused to waive the 50 co-sponsor rule, and our resolution was not brought up for consideration. We are determined, however, to push for the passage of a National Surveyor's Week Resolution by the full Congress in 2007.

The Surveyor's Week resolution was not the only important piece of legislation that Congress failed to pass. The House passed Federal Prison Industries Reform legislation, but the Senate did not. The House passed Association Health Plan legislation, but the Senate did not. Therefore, both of these bills, important to surveyors, will continue to be on the forefront of our efforts. The House and Senate both introduced legislation relating to FEMA's Flood Map Modernization Program, but neither of the bills were brought up for consideration. Also, the House Small Business Committee promised to have hearings on the offshoring of A/E services, but as Congress ended for the year, no hearings took place.

We are optimistic about 2007 and the 110th Congress. Not only will we work to reintroduce the important bills that did not pass Congress in the last session; but we have plans to work on several

new pieces of legislation that will benefit the surveying community.

In an effort to bring a new generation of surveyors and mapping professionals into the business, we will work to secure federal funding for the growth of the Trig-Star Program. It is important to start making requests for federal funding as early in the year as possible, and we expect to begin meeting with Members of Congress on this issue as soon as possible.

We also plan to work with Congress to pass legislation relating to the monumentation of abandoned railroads. This has been an issue that ACSM has worked on for many years. Efforts to get a favorable ruling with the Surface and Transportation Board on this issue have not been successful, so taking the legislative route has become a more viable option.

Since we have several Congressional friends on relevant committees in both the House and the Senate, we feel optimistic about our chances of success. We laid the groundwork for this issue (as well as the Trig-Star funding issue) during our meetings with Congressional staff on Lobby Day in September 2006.

There are rumors floating around Washington that the new Congress will look at two issues that are relevant to the surveying community—the federal contracting procedures and the Davis-Bacon Act.

The awarding of no-bid contracts in the past is the reason behind the Democrat-controlled Congress' drive to review federal contracting procedures. Last year, Rep. Mike Andrews (D-NJ) introduced legislation that would cancel federal contracts for contractors repeatedly violating Davis-Bacon. The Republican-controlled Congress did not bring the bill up for consideration. With a Democratic House and Senate, prevailing wages for new programs and re-authorized laws are again more probable and certainly more supported on Capitol Hill. We will monitor both of these issues carefully.

Thus, once again, we have a full plate of issues before us with the new Congress. We fully expect to have some fights on a number of these issues, but we are certain to have a good number of victories too.

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