

2015 HR Florida Chapter Excellence Awards – Legislative Affairs

Day on the Hill/Day in the Beltway

Every year HR Tampa attends the Day on The Hill in Tallahassee and continues to develop relationships at a state level. Our current Director of Legislation has attended this trip for the past four years. This event continues to grow and we are committed to encouraging participation from the chapter members. This year in April there were 4 members from HR Tampa in attendance.

The Director of Legislation has been leading an annual trip to Washington D.C. to participate in SHRM's Day in the Beltway event for ten years. We encourage our membership to attend this event and the chapter covers the flights and hotel stay for all participants. This year we invited SHRM to present information about advocacy to our membership in order to educate them on the benefits of advocacy, the SHRM A-Team, and taking an active role in shaping public policy based on their own experiences. We are currently displaying information about this trip on our legislative page and have addressed the membership at each chapter meeting about this opportunity. We will be drawing names from those submissions and hope to take many of them along.

This event has been a great way for HR Professionals to get an in-depth look at how federal legislation directly impacts their workplace, as well as demonstrating that they can make a difference by using their HR expertise and passion for their profession by speaking to their elected officials and staffers to ensure that they understand how the bills that they are voting on impact the workplace and its employees. We have successfully increased the number of participants that go on this trip and have had over 20 HR Tampa members request to attend. 2015 will have the largest representation to date.

I thought it would be beneficial to reach out to SHRM so they could provide some insight as to how our involvement has helped to make a difference through our advocacy efforts. The below paragraph was provided by Meredith Nethercutt, SHRM's Senior Associate for Member Advocacy.

HR Tampa Advocates: Strong Local Network and Ongoing Dialogue with Lawmakers

“HR professionals who establish and maintain an ongoing relationship with a lawmaker can make all the difference when key workplace issues come before Congress. Through SHRM’s A-Team member advocacy initiative, a strong network of over 7,700 engaged HR professionals, SHRM works to promote and showcase the value of its advocates as they work to advance the interests of the HR profession in the development of federal public policy throughout the year. HR Tampa members in particular have made it a priority to become a reliable resource to their members of Congress – whether by quickly sending an email to their lawmaker on a key workplace bill or vote in Congress; by placing a phone call to discuss an HR issue with their lawmaker and/or staff; by scheduling local face-to-face meetings when Congress heads home for congressional recesses throughout the year; or even by making a special visit to Washington, D.C. In particular, a group of HR Tampa advocates regularly travel to Washington, D.C. to visit the federal Florida delegation on Capitol Hill. Their last visit in fall 2014 resulted in highly productive conversations with congressional offices on such key HR issues as FLSA overtime regulations and a federal contractor “blacklisting” amendment circulating in Congress. In a recent legislative victory this spring, due to personal phone calls and conversations between key HR Tampa A-Team ambassadors and various Florida House of Representatives members, this harmful workplace legislation focusing on federal contractors failed by a solid margin in the U.S. House. The group will continue to engage and again visit the nation’s capital this fall to keep a dialogue going with these key lawmakers and staff as we head into a presidential election in 2016.”

Legislative Updates

Our chapter meets monthly and during those meetings we provide the membership with current legislative updates to keep them apprised of current and pending legislation. This information is also posted on our website for members that are unable to attend the meetings. This year we are reaching out to different law firms from the local area to provide these legislative updates to the chapter. We provide them with a small block of time at the start of our meeting and allow for questions from the membership.

Encourage Constituent Calls and E-mails

HR Tampa understands that members of Congress are often responsive to voter opinion, especially before she/he returns to the state to meet with constituents. We encourage our members to call and/or e-mail a member of Congress before recess or while in town to create the impression that there are mounting objections to a member of Congress’ stance on a particular issue.

Updates from the SHRM-A-Team are placed on our website and email blasts are sent to members to alert them that their assistance is needed to contact the office of their Representative or Senator in order to gain their support for or against bills that are going to be presented for vote. This initiative advances the HR profession by allowing HR Professionals to call on their experience and expertise in the field of Human Resources to educate members of Congress on the significant impact their decisions make on the workplace.

SHRM A-Team Involvement

Our Director of Legislation serves as an Advocacy Captain for the SHRM A-Team and was invited to participate on a discussion panel during the 2015 Legal and Legislative Conference in Washington, DC in order to share HR Tampa's strategy for advancing the profession by their commitment to the Day in the Beltway initiative. She was able to outline the initiative for other chapter members and act as a resource to assist them in creating their own Day in the Beltway initiatives.

There are currently 25 HR Tampa members serving on the SHRM A-Team, including 3 Captains.

Our Director of Legislation has worked to build relationships with the staff members of the Representatives on both the state and federal level over the past few years. Most recently she was asked by SHRM to contact the office of Rep Gus Bilirakis to request him to vote no on the Pocan Amendment. The Legislative aid took her call and provided detailed information that she was able to relay back to SHRM. This information has been provided below for reference:

Hi Kim,

Thank you again for the below update, and for placing the call to Rep. Bilirakis and his staff yesterday. We really appreciate your time and effort with this call to action, and I am thrilled to announce that the amendment was in fact voted down last night (186-237) – thanks in large part to phone calls/communications like yours. And great news – Rep. Bilirakis did in fact vote with SHRM in opposing this amendment! I'll be sending out additional information in a note of thanks to the full SHRM A-Team later today, but wanted to thank you personally for your help.

Have a great weekend!

Meredith

From: Kim B.
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2015 2:29 PM
To: Nethercutt, Meredith
Subject: Fwd: Key Federal Contractor Vote at 4:30 pm ET

Hi Meredith,

Please see below. I called and spoke to Joe Millado in Representative Bilirakis's office. I told him I would send the information below so he could reference it if he needed to but he told me that since it would be public knowledge shortly anyway, he didn't mind sharing with me that Representative Bilirakis would be opposing this now and if it gets presented with energy and water which he said might happen.

Thanks!

Kim Boulahanis, PHR, SHRM-CP
[REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

From: "Kim B."
Date: Apr 30, 2015 2:23:25 PM
Subject: Key Federal Contractor Vote at 4:30 pm ET
To: joe.millado@mail.house.gov

Hi Joe,

Thanks so much for taking the time to speak with me this afternoon. As promised, the concerns regarding the Pocan Amendment are listed below:

As a constituent from [REDACTED], Florida, a human resource professional, and one of more than 275,000 members of the Society for Human Resource Management, or SHRM, I urge the Representative to vote NO on the "Pocan amendment," and on any amendment to Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations bills that would debar federal contractors with even a single Fair Labor Standards Act or FLSA violation within the last five years for the following reasons:

Federal agencies already have the authority to initiate a suspension and debarment proceeding for contractors with labor violations. Plus, federal contractors are already subject to a myriad of complex and overlapping federal and state laws. While HR professionals diligently focus on compliance with federal and state laws (SHRM's HR Knowledge Center responds to thousands of inquiries each year regarding the FLSA, for example), confusing and complex regulations mean even the best employers can run into compliance challenges. I oppose the Pocan amendment because it would unfairly prevent a significant amount of employers from competing for federal contracts.

As we discussed, I respectfully request the Representative oppose any amendment that would punish employers for a single FLSA violation. If I can answer any questions or serve as a resource to you and your office on this critical issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate it. I hope to be able to visit when I am there in September for our annual Day inside the Beltway.

As always, please thank Representative Bilirakis for his willingness to hear my concerns and his continued support.

Regards,

Kim Boulahanis, PHR, SHRM-CP

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