

CONNECT Works for YOU!

Coalition of New England Companies for Trade

The largest and most effective non-profit international trade organization in the Northeast

Join
Online Now at
www.conect.org

Our members say...

"CONNECT offers a great platform for networking with colleagues in the compliance community. ... I have been a longtime member and try to participate in as many forums that CONNECT offers as possible. They are always worthwhile."

Misty Rutter

*Director of Worldwide Trade Compliance
3Com*

"International trade is pretty complex, with a lot of moving parts. CONNECT brings together people from the various businesses related to trade, and is very helpful in keeping me abreast of changes and better ways of conducting international business."

Robert Worth

Worth Imports Inc.

Membership Rates

\$225/year Individual

\$395/year Corporate

(Up to 4 company employees)

\$595/year Large Corporate

(Up to 10 company employees)



**Coalition
Of
New
England
Companies for
Trade**

*"Dedicated to Promoting
Free and Fair Trade"*



CONNECT Trade Briefing 2008



CONNECT hosts CBP Commissioner Basham



Members tour Port of Boston cargo facilities

Companies all over the U.S. benefit from membership in CONECT. Join now to take part in these events:

- The Northeast's largest Cargo Symposium held each fall
- Trade & Transportation Conference – 2 ½ days of programs featuring high level speakers on critical industry topics
- CBP classification seminars
- Cargo facility tours
- Annual Washington D.C. Trade Briefing – 1 ½ days of meetings with members of Congress, CBP, White House and U.S. Trade Representative staff
- Breakfast Roundtables featuring U.S. Senators and Congressmen
- Annual meeting, annual golf outing and other excellent networking opportunities
- Special events with members of Congress, key executive branch officials, state and local representatives and prominent New England business people
- Networking events throughout the year and more...

And, our members enjoy these benefits:

- Regular updates providing current status of federal issues and insights on how these issues may be resolved
- Opportunities to earn CCS points
- E-Mail memos providing late-breaking news on critical trade issues
- Active representation on Capitol Hill
- Direct internet link to member website from CONECT website
- Discounted registration for all CONECT events and access to member-only events
- Industry-wide job board
- "Ask the Attorney" column – legal advice on trade issues

Join online at www.conect.org or call for more information

508-481-0424 toll free 1-877-9CONNECT

CONNECT: The work horse for New England trade



Based in Southborough, Mass., the Coalition of New England Companies for Trade is the largest nonprofit member-based international trade organization in the Northeast. In fact, there may be no organization in the U.S. similar to CONECT in the areas of pro-trade advocacy, continuous industry education and networking opportunities.

Composed of importers, exporters, manufacturers, traders, trade associations, customs brokers, freight forwarders, non-vessel-operating common carriers, logistics and transportation providers, financial institutions, law and accounting firms, warehouses and distribution centers, CONECT offers myriad services for international trade-related companies.

CONECT is recognized as a highly effective political voice for its members. Its core mission is to educate local, state and feder-

al government representatives about the benefits of international trade, and bring members together with policymakers to ensure that new rules and regulations are fair to all businesses dependent on free and fair trade. CONECT's voice is also heard in efforts to enhance the U.S. trade and transportation infrastructure.

In the increasingly complex and challenging global trade environment, CONECT also educates its members on crucial industry issues to keep them constantly updated and informed. Long-time member Tim Barrett, chief operating officer of Barrett Distribution Centers, praised the organization: "CONECT is our go-to source for knowledge, expertise and connections related to all aspects of our import and export supply-chain operations. Through the tangible value delivered at CONECT educational events, we have become trusted advisers to

our clients regarding their import and export operations."

CONECT also sponsors well-attended networking events, which allow members to meet peers, vendors and clients to discuss concerns, increase their industry contacts and gain additional sources for industry information.

In the beginning . . .

Incorporated in 1991, CONECT was founded by 10 Massachusetts business people involved in international trade, including its first president, Joan Paddock, who was employed by Reebok at the time. The catalyst for its creation was the filing of an apparel and footwear quota bill in Congress in 1989.

Peter Friedmann, Reebok's attorney, told senior management that if the bill passed, Reebok's ability to import *(continued below)*

footwear would be compromised. He suggested that the company contact Bay State congressmen and inform them that the quota would negatively affect many Massachusetts importers. Senior management supported the idea, sending Friedmann and Paddock to Washington.

There, the pair found that the New England congressmen were shocked to hear from constituents in favor of imports. They told Paddock and Friedmann that they had typically only heard from the other side of the fence; from the labor unions lobbying to impose quotas. It was evident to the Reebok representatives that this was not just a quota issue — it was a trade policy issue. There was a widespread misunderstanding by congressmen who believed that manufacturing was still strong in New England, when in fact, that scenario had changed over the prior decades.

Paddock and Friedmann were now on a mission and back in New England they formed a steering committee to give political voice to the silent New England import community. One suggestion for a name was the Massachusetts Apparel and Footwear Importers Association. "We wanted an acronym that was catchy," Friedmann said. "MAFIA was catchy, but probably not a good idea." *(continued)*

CONECT

Member Benefits

- Special discounted pricing for members at all CONECT events.
- Active representation on Capitol Hill.
- Annual Members-Only Trade Briefing meeting in Washington D.C. — a full day and a half of meetings with Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, White House and U.S. Trade Representative staffs. Also, small group meetings with members of Congress on Capitol Hill to discuss CONECT members' trade and transportation needs.
- "CONNECTivity" e-mails providing late-breaking news on critical national and international trade and transportation issues, current status updates on federal issues and insights into how they may be resolved.
- Semi-annual printed newsletters offering member profiles, a Washington, D.C. update, a six-month review of the organization and the industry and a six-month look forward.
- Direct link to corporate members' websites from CONECT website.
- "Ask The Attorney" column — members ask any legal trade question, and it will be answered by a member attorney.
- Discount on industry subscriptions to magazines and journals.
- Members may nominate students for CONECT's annual Chafee Scholarships.
- Access to Members-Only events.

Annual Events

- Annual 2 1/2 day Trade and Transportation Conference in Newport, R.I., featuring top industry speakers discussing critical issues in international trade and transportation.
- Annual Golf Outing in August.
- Annual half-day Northeast Cargo Symposium in Boston each fall, featuring top industry speakers discussing critical issues in international trade and transportation.
- Cargo facilities tours.
- Customs and Border Protection classification seminars (commodities vary).
- Special events with Congress members, key executive branch officials, state and local representatives and prominent New England business people.
- Breakfast roundtable gatherings throughout New England featuring area senators and congress members.
- Annual summer CONECT meeting, featuring an educational afternoon followed by an enjoyable networking evening at a unique venue. ■



www.conect.org

The steering committee broadened its scope, adding shippers of other commodities. Many were once manufacturers but were now, in large part, importers and in some cases, exporters. They all felt the need to pull together to form a unified voice. The result was CONECT and the current and more inclusive acronym was adopted.

By the way, the footwear and apparel quota bill didn't pass. "I can't say we could take all the credit for that," said Friedmann, who is now CONECT's counsel.

The organization continued its political winning streak by serving as a strong advocate for approving permanent normal trade relations with China and Vietnam.

"We received some affirmative votes from the New England congressional delegation, and they attributed their votes to the message CONECT brought to them," said Karen Kenney, vice president of Liberty International and current president of CONECT. "They now understood the importance of permanent normal trade relations to the companies in New England and to the country as a whole," she said.

CONECT has indeed made political inroads, Kenney said. "A lot of New England congressmen now contact CONECT when a trade bill comes to their desk. They call us and ask us what our position is and how a bill impacts our membership. The fact that

events including Red Sox games, wine tastings, golf and more. "CONECT membership is like "one-stop shopping" at its best," Turner said.

Its full name — Coalition of New England Companies for Trade — belies CONECT's membership make-up, as more than 20 percent of its members are from outside New England. Some very active members hail from Canada, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Texas and California, and cite CONECT's superior networking and educational opportunities — all offered at relatively low prices — as their reason for joining.

"Some of our distant members might attend only one or two CONECT programs in a year, but they find their membership worthwhile for all those extra benefits," Turner said.

Reston, Va.-based Geoff Giovanetti, managing director of the Wine and Spirits Shippers Association, uses his CONECT membership well. "I certainly believe in combining forces within a cooperative effort and feel that CONECT does an excellent job of



The 2008 Northeast Trade and Transportation conference in Newport, R.I., brought CONECT members together with top industry speakers.

they're interested in our opinion has been a major step forward."

Growth spurt ensues

By 1999, CONECT had the wherewithal to hire a board member, Carol Turner, as executive director. Turner promoted CONECT far and wide to those who would benefit most.

educating and representing companies involved in international trade, no matter where they are located," he said. "Being a member of CONECT has kept us 'connected' to the concerns of our own New England membership better than any other means we have available. It also provides us an outstanding forum to address concerns with decision-makers involved in transportation and port services, legislation and regulations."

Political objectives

CONECT has always been responsive to the changing political leadership in Congress and in the White House. As power shifts between Republicans and Democrats, so do federal trade and transportation policies and so must CONECT's federal agenda. Objectives remain the same — to expand the opportunities for businesses in international trade, to provide an environment conducive to trade growth and to assure federal services and transportation infrastructure necessary to facilitate this growth.

The November 2008 elections resulted in

"It was not a hard sell," Turner said, "because CONECT offers a great return on investment. Where else can a company get expert trade, legal and customs advice, news of crucial industry issues, meetings and cargo tours with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and personal meetings with congressmen?" CONECT also hosts networking (continued below)

a dramatic shift of political power in both the executive and legislative branches. Presently, every congressman and woman in the six New England states and all but two of the senators are Democrats, as well as the president. CONECT will focus its advocacy on Democratic policymakers who will control the trade agenda. Over the years, CONECT has found that economic growth is a shared objective of the Republican and Democratic elected officials. Thus, CONECT works with both management and labor as well as service providers. On behalf of New England's retail, manufacturing, transportation and service sectors, CONECT will continue to work to remove the obstacles to economic growth, burdensome and unnecessary cargo-security regulations and trade restrictions.

The annual CONECT Federal Trade and Transportation Policy Briefing in Washington — and the periodic New England roundtables with local members of Congress — provide CONECT members with the opportunity to meet with decision makers and carry the pro-trade message. In these (continued)

forums, CONECT members help educate federal policymakers who need to know the impact of their proposals and trade policies on New England business.

Michelle Darling, manager of international transportation at BJ's Wholesale Club, was thrilled with the 2008 briefing. "This experience went beyond my expectations," she said. "You have awarded CONECT participants a bird's eye view of how Washington works, and, most importantly, you've given us an opportunity to have an impact on the proceedings and future legislative actions. The knowledge gained is extremely valuable."

Strength in numbers

CONECT has grown to serve more than 700 members representing basically every facet of international trade. A 21-member board of directors governs the organization, and a board member who serves as a state chair represents each of the six New England states.

CONECT's board was recently injected with some "new blood" in the form of five new members from the industry who further strengthened and energized the entire group. Their fresh ideas, new contacts and great enthusiasm all promise to boost CONECT into new areas of interest — educationally and geographically.

An important new area of interest is in the export arena. Currently, the largest percentage of CONECT members — 37 percent — are in the combined fields of imports and exports, but most of those are importers. This imbalance offers CONECT an obvious growth opportunity. "While the weak dollar has hampered importers, it certainly has created a lot more opportunities for exporters," Kenney said. "We plan to focus on attracting more exporters to the



PHOTO: CONECT

CONECT members converge in the Senate Finance Committee's office during their annual Federal Trade and Transportation Policy Briefing in Washington, D.C.

organization through programs that will appeal to their educational needs."

Geographically, CONECT's board members will help to execute more CONECT programs in their own locales. These programs will sometimes be handled as collaborations with other industry organizations, drawing attendees from both groups for even greater success.

It is through such events that CONECT hopes to continue its phenomenal growth,

gathering new members in new locales and spreading its mission throughout the Northeast and beyond.

Kenney is delighted with the growth and strength of the current CONECT, stating, "This organization has come many miles since that first meeting in 1991, and we plan to keep it going. In uncertain economic times, smart business people seek a competitive edge, and CONECT offers just that. ■

CONECT welcomes new members



**Coalition
Of
New
England
Companies for
Trade**

to attend trade and transportation events, to network and to get active in the industry — You don't have to live in New England to join!

Go to www.conect.org

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