

1. **Nominated Organization:** National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
2. **Name of Person Submitting the Nomination:** Jim Riley
3. **Submitter's Phone Number and Email Address:** (703) 526-1084 / jriley@nssga.org
4. **Name of Program Manager/Senior Administrator:** Jim Riley and Pam Whitted
5. **Is the nomination for grassroots, PAC or does it have general government relations applications?:** Grassroots
6. **What is the innovation?:** In January, NSSGA launched a year-long "Driving It Home 2015" grassroots initiative designed to educate members of Congress on and advocate for enactment of a well-funded, multi-year highway bill, as well as to oppose the EPA's Waters of the United States rule. Key to this effort was facilitating tours for members of Congress and their staff to aggregate industry facilities to learn firsthand the impact that such legislation and regulations have upon their constituents. We have worked to engage our membership in this way before with limited success (and even more limited feedback). This year we added an additional component that dynamically changed this advocacy effort. Each time a member company hosted a congressional visitor, we disseminated a separate Digital Aggregates news article and picture to the entire NSSGA membership to spotlight that specific event and urge other companies to participate. The recognition helped to ignite a friendly competition and soon we had a steady flow of visits occurring and we were receiving detailed feedback like never before that included photos of our members with their representatives and senators. During the August congressional recess alone, we recorded nearly three dozen such visits to our members' facilities and they are still taking place. Concurrently, the NSSGA Communications staff created an Aggregates in Action (or A2, the name of our grassroots program), webpage to house our legislative action alerts and other tools to ease our members ability to contact their members of Congress.
7. **What prompted this innovation?:** We have tried for a number of years to ingrain grassroots participation in our membership using various tools including competitions and awards. While these have met with success, we were not satisfied with the level of involvement or feedback. At the onset of 2015, we determined that we needed to pull out all the stops to achieve congressional passage of a multi-year highway bill this year or face a continuing series of short-term extensions. We recognized if a surface transportation reauthorization did not pass in 2015, it was likely that there would not be a highway bill until sometime in the second-half of 2017 at the earliest. For NSSGA members who provide the construction materials that are the chief ingredient in asphalt and concrete, this was unacceptable. The aggregates industry is slowly recovering from the 2008 recession and short-term extensions prevent long-term planning and informed allocation of human and financial resources. We knew that we needed to develop a grassroots campaign that would appeal to our members' competitive spirit and the importance of recognition for their efforts, particularly with their corporate peers. As a result, we launched "Driving It Home 2015" with the aforementioned spotlight component.
8. **How is this innovation likely to change the way political involvement programs are conducted?:** Previously we conducted monthly-themed grassroots action campaigns, which were clever, but did not allow our members sufficient time to respond. Changing to a year-long campaign that expeditiously highlights and recognizes member advocacy activities made a real difference. NSSGA will continue individually spotlighting our members for their involvement and do so in a more immediate manner as we have done in this particular instance. The flexibility that mass digital communications provides enables us to do so without the need to abide by the deadlines or space considerations associated with more traditional media such as our bimonthly magazine.
9. **What can public affairs professionals learn from your innovation?:** Never underestimate the power of the competitive spirit and employ it to achieve advocacy success and a goal that benefits the entire industry. Additionally, spotlighting one company prompts action by another until you discover you have assembled an army of advocates!

Following is an example of what we have done with our spotlight program:

Hawkeye State Continues Advocacy Efforts

In yet another effort to press Congress on the importance of passing a multi-year surface transportation bill, Wendling Quarries Inc. accepted the NSSGA's grassroots advocacy challenge and hosted Rep. Rod Blum, R-IA-1, for an Aug. 21 tour of the C.R. South Quarry in Cedar Rapids, Ia. Employees of Wendling Quarries, L.L. Pelling asphalt paving company and Manatt's Inc. discussed with Blum their frustration with the proposed Water of the U.S. rule that will go into effect Aug. 28 and the negative effects it will have on their businesses and state-wide infrastructure projects. The group also took time to drive home the message that Congress must act to pass a multi-year highway bill.

Tony Manatt, president of Wendling Quarries, said that the congressman left with a better understanding of how the aggregates industry contributes to local communities and infrastructure projects as well as the industry's recycling abilities. Rep. Blum talked with local media after the meeting and stressed the importance of passing long-term surface transportation reauthorization and safeguarding the growth of the aggregates industry. [Watch that video here.](#)

"We appreciated the opportunity to have time with Congressman Blum to educate him on our operations and show him why our quality jobs are so important to Iowa," Manatt said. "The transportation needs of Iowa continue to grow, yet short-term extensions of highway bills don't allow us to hire more employees, buy new equipment or plan for the future. Along those lines, Departments of Transportation hesitate to invest in infrastructure projects if they are unsure of the availability of federal dollars from the Highway Trust Fund to defray costs."

With more than a week left in this congressional recess, there is still time for members to arrange a facility or project tour like this with their members of Congress. For information about setting up your next tour or meeting, visit www.aggregatesinaction.org.

Have you recently hosted a congressman or senator? Let NSSGA know! Pictures and intel gathered by members gives NSSGA the information and tools to effectively educate Congress on issues affecting the aggregates industry.