

The NJ Chamber Walk to Washington Train Ride - A Brief Recap

By Robert S. Goldsmith

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Last Thursday morning, I was one of about 900 business professionals, lobbyists, reporters and politicians to participate in the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce's yearly two-day networking train ride from Newark to Washington D.C. My in-a-nutshell perception of year's event, dubbed by organizers as "The Walk to Washington and Drive to ReNew Jersey" in acknowledgment of Sandy and its ongoing impacts, is that it was more upbeat and more well attended than has been the case in recent years.

I am, admittedly, an optimistic person. Still, the 14-car long Amtrak train seemed far more crowded this time around, and the atmosphere was generally positive, with considerably more energy and fewer complaints in the air. For me, and many I spoke with, the ride was productive and engaging - a great opportunity to "chop wood," as our firm's co-founder Arthur Greenbaum would say.

Legislators from both the Senate and Assembly, representing both parties, interacted in a cordial and reassuring way. A good deal was said about the Economic Opportunity Act of 2013, a legislative initiative introduced in January to provide financial incentives for redevelopment projects with an emphasis on job creation, which is expected to move forward with bipartisan support. Sustainable development and alternative energy were also popular topics, reflecting optimism concerning the housing marketplace's increased receptiveness to sustainability, coupled with frustration over diminishing solar incentives and the continued obstacle of SREC values.

Predictably, though, both onboard the train and in Governor Christie's keynote address at the Thursday night Congressional Dinner, the dominant issue and focus of concern was all about the ongoing process of recovering and rebuilding from Sandy.

I have just logged my fifth Chamber train ride in as many years. I make the trip each year because it is an exceptional "captive audience" type of networking opportunity, where everyone comes prepared to see and be seen, speak and listen, observe, absorb, and be part of something unique. On Friday's train ride home, though, I found myself thinking about how important it was, this year in particular, to be part of this event. In the aftermath of Sandy, as we all still struggle to absorb and understand the long-term impacts of the storm, and as we plot a sound course for our future, the Chamber train ride was a strong reminder that New Jersey is, indeed, a very special place to live and work.

Press Releases (Cont.)

The Author of this recap, **Robert S. Goldsmith**, is a partner in the firm's Real Estate Department and Chair of the Redevelopment Practice Group.