





# 2013 NAA CAPITOL CONFERENCE

Industry members  
participate in an  
exciting week of  
advocacy in  
Washington, D.C.

**A** record number of visits to Capitol Hill by NAA members and the continued rollout of a high-powered industry public relations effort highlighted an exciting week of advocacy for the apartment industry at the annual NAA Capitol Conference in March.

Nearly 500 members, including more than 100 first-time attendees, enjoyed networking events and presentations that offered insight and a bit of humor about today's political landscape.

Some 317 visits on Capitol Hill took place as NAA brought positive words and real-life stories about apartment living and the economic and social success that it brings to communities nationwide. Key points also were made about how the apartment industry creates jobs as part of an overall Trillion Dollar Industry.



The highest-priority government issues shared by NAA members with their elected officials included input on immigration, tax reform and housing finance (the Government Sponsored Enterprises—GSEs).

Those key points were made as part of NAA/NMHC’s exciting new national public service campaign “Apartments. We Live Here,” which includes national data from esteemed professor Stephen S. Fuller, Ph.D., and the website [www.WeAreApartments.org](http://www.WeAreApartments.org).

The website features an interactive map providing the apartment industry’s economic impact for all 50 states and 12 metro areas, as well as an online calculator, the Apartment Community Estimator that determines the potential economic impact of an apartment community within a specific state.

Highest-priority government issues shared by NAA members with their elected officials included input on immigration, tax reform and housing finance (the Government Sponsored Enterprises—GSEs). Key talking points on these issues were provided to NAA members during the Hill briefing presentation made by NMHC at the conference.

Videos about these key issues also were made available on the NAA website for those unable to attend in person or who wished to be briefed in advance of the Capitol Conference.

## Setting the Tone

The proper mood and sense of importance was established early in the conference when guest speaker Michael E. Dunn, who focuses on grassroots advocacy and political action commit-

tees, delivered “Taking Political Involvement to the Next Level.”

Dunn’s light-hearted, well-informed perspective about advocacy underscored the importance of communicating with elected officials. Among his key comments:

“For every policy decision made in Congress today, there is going to be a winner and a loser. There are no decisions that please everyone.”

“Techniques for today’s advocacy are so much different than 10 or 15 years ago, and industries need to adapt.”

“Our government is a democracy, but it’s a special-interest-intense-based society.”

“The fatal flaw in today’s democracy is that it is only affected by those who choose to participate in it. For your industry’s sake, you need to make the choice to participate.”

“Because of the growth in SuperPACs, candidates today are losing control of their message. So, industries today must sup-

port their candidates more heavily through PACs so that these candidates have the funding to take back control of their message.”

Attendees also were offered the opportunity to learn more about advocacy and PAC fundraising during three breakout education sessions. Each delivered important information and strategies about how industry members could advocate more effectively and offered ideas on how to fundraise locally.

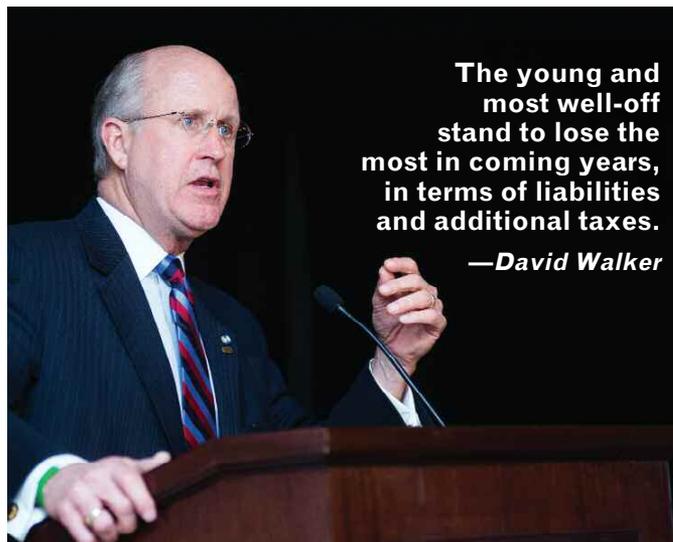


Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R-Texas-19) (above) and Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) (below) address attendees during the NAAAPAC Better Government Fund Reception.





David Walker (above right), founder and CEO of the Comeback America Initiative, shares with attendees ideas for fixing the fiscal crisis. Attendees pay close attention (right) during a session.



**The young and most well-off stand to lose the most in coming years, in terms of liabilities and additional taxes.**

—David Walker

Members learned how to effectively tell their story so that they can better impact legislation. Guest speakers explained how to build a story in an interactive, hands-on session. Attendees practiced effective storytelling with their peers in preparation for their Hill meetings on Wednesday.

NAA's affiliates and member companies who deal daily with the PR impact of a multitude of issues learned how to use communications campaigns to garner the support they need. A Public Affairs Council expert shared secrets on integrating traditional and social media to amplify messages. Two of the industry's top PR professionals spoke about how they created their own successful campaigns.

### Lunch Speaker Offers Ominous Message

The NAA Capitol Conference luncheon speaker David Walker, founder and CEO of the Comeback America Initiative, shared how the fiscal crisis can be fixed to ensure that the United States enjoys a sustainable economy.

Walker is a former U.S. comptroller general and subject of the critically acclaimed documentary, "I.O.U.S.A."

Walker delivered a devastating look at the unsustainable financial path in which the government has led the nation, particularly as it relates to debt as a percentage of the GDP. "Math is the new four-letter word in Washington," Walker says. He also strongly suggested that government "has no choice but to make tough choices."

He says that his polling of Americans shows that they understand the financial crisis and the importance of "making hard choices," but that public officials either disagree with Americans' level of willingness or fear making these tough decisions.

Walker laid the blame on many, including those from both parties, but says President Barack Obama is most to blame. "He's the Chief Executive Officer of this country and now has to



start acting like one by showing leadership," Walker says. That comment drew the loudest applause.

Walker pointed out that the young and those most well-off financially stand to lose the most in the coming years in terms of liabilities and additional taxes. He warned that the new national health care program set to begin in 2014 will cost far more than any public official or "so-called expert" is willing to say.

Attendees also had opportunities to network and reconnect with industry friends. One popular event was the regular performance by The Capitol Steps comedy troupe.

These congressional staffers-turned-comedians travel the nation satirizing the very people and places that once employed them. It wouldn't be the Capitol Conference without them. They took a few easy shots at sequestration, the budget and four more years with today's administration. They also brought back a few comedy skits from the past 30 years.

### NAAPAC Event Raises Funds

NAAPAC held its annual fundraising event, sponsored by AUM, at the Top of the Hay at the Hay-Adams hotel, featuring Chef Roland Mesnier, former Executive White House Pastry Chef. Frank Barefield won the diamond earrings, sponsored by the Apartment Association of Greater Orlando. 

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