

Renewing Faith in Our Government

A NIRI Kansas City officer shares insights from NIRI's first Leadership Week.

BY DON ALLEN

In recent months the political environment in Washington, D.C. has made me not want to watch the evening news, a habit that's almost ingrained in my DNA. But I was fortunate to be part of a group of NIRI members from 13 chapters who converged on Washington for NIRI Leadership Week 2017 (described in "Spotlight on Advocacy" on page 9), and I have to say that when you dig below the surface you learn that we ordinary citizens should have no fears about our government's purpose and its survival. It's a very different experience at the granular level of actually running our federal government.

In addition to excellent planning sessions regarding the future of NIRI as an organization, we were given the opportunity to meet with selected members of Congress – in both the House and the Senate – and many of their staffers; to discuss issues with Commissioner Michael Piwovar of the Securities and Exchange Commission; and to meet and discuss disclosure regulations with staff members from three SEC divisions: Corporation Finance, Trading and Markets, and Investment Management.

We were divided into four groups for legislative meetings intended to provide specific corporate support to NIRI's advocacy for updating the 13D and 13F disclosure regulations as well as a call for increased oversight of proxy advisory firms. The intent was to encourage representatives or senators to support legislative changes and, in some cases, more importantly, to co-sponsor bills. NIRI members learned firsthand why lobbyists are called lobbyists. In several cases, we literally met with staffers in the hallways outside their offices. It was an impressive and perhaps unexpected experience and said a lot about how hard staffers work to provide support for our elected lawmakers.



During the SEC sessions, Commissioner Piwovar provided very practical commentary and insights on the future of the agency. The following day, we met at SEC headquarters with representatives of three major divisions. NIRI presented its positions on major issues and our members provided specific examples of how some outdated regulations can seriously impact a company in its goal of providing proper disclosure. It was truly a two-way conversation and we learned that NIRI members aren't the only ones who feel certain changes need to be made.

The consensus from our NIRI group was that we got to meet very smart, dedicated people who do their best to ensure that government responds to real world needs and empowers corporate America to function well. It's quite different from the political circus you see on the evening news, and renewed our faith that our government will survive contention at the highest levels. [IR](#)

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Don Allen, Partner with The Allen Group and NIRI Kansas City Program Director, (left) and NIRI Capital Area Chapter President David D. Dixon, vice president at Wells Fargo Shareholder Services, on Capitol Hill during the first-ever NIRI Leadership Week.