



October 3, 2017

Giant Steps

Words fail me. Were I a better writer, I could more adequately convey the depth of engagement and commitment exhibited by more than 50 NIRI member-leaders last week. They participated in the first-ever NIRI Leadership Week in Washington, D.C.

NIRI Leadership Week included a legislative briefing, visits to House and Senate offices, a chapter leadership conference, a Board of Directors meeting, a meeting with Securities and Exchange Commission officials, a meeting of key sponsors, and a reception and dinner to thank and celebrate everyone for participating. It was a remarkable and busy few days.

Members came from coast to coast to engage in some of the most important business that NIRI undertakes on behalf of listed companies. During the first-ever NIRI legislative briefing, SEC Commissioner Michael Piwowar addressed more than 35 NIRI volunteers, providing insight on agency priorities and potential changes under new Chairman Jay Clayton. The next day, more than 40 members met with a dozen senior SEC staffers, including Bill Hinman, the new director of the Corporation Finance Division. A frank dialogue took place during which both sides exchanged views and asked questions on such issues as proxy advisor reform and 13D and 13F modernization. It was a very productive meeting and several follow-up items are now being pursued.

During NIRI's inaugural "Legislative Fly-In," more than three dozen members visited a dozen House and Senate offices on Capitol Hill. These meetings varied in length and intensity, but several were quite productive and helped to advance NIRI's policy agenda. Just as importantly, members gained valuable experience in advocating for greater shareholder transparency and the regulation of proxy advisors.

While chapter leaders have gotten together before, it has been a few years since their last leadership conference. The two dozen chapter leaders from across the country gathered to discuss issues of concern and identify ways to collaborate with each other and with NIRI National. Chapter leaders also engaged in a facilitated strategic discussion, informing the development of a new strategic plan for NIRI

National.

In another first, NIRI's top sponsors gathered to discuss the forthcoming year and identify ways to better partner with NIRI and each other to contribute thought leadership and help to advance the IR profession.

That was also the focus of the Board of Directors meeting. You'll hear more about some of the outcomes of that meeting very soon. One of the most significant is an updating of NIRI's bylaws to reflect current best practices and provide for a more inclusive and sustainable organization.

The response to Leadership Week was so positive that we are already planning another series of events in Washington in September 2018. Details will be shared as soon as plans are confirmed. I hope you will plan to join the many members who are willing to work hard to advance the investor relations profession and help build and grow NIRI.

While the excitement of last week is fresh in our minds, our hearts are overtaken by news of the stunning tragedy of the Las Vegas shooting. I know that all NIRI members are outraged by this senseless act and share compassion for the victims and those impacted by this violence. Let's all make an extra effort this week to balance the scales, even if just a little, by committing a random act of kindness. When we feel powerless, we can take power in being kind to others.

All the best,
Gary



Gary A. LaBranche, FASAE, CAE
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Investor Relations Institute
glabranche@niri.org