

MBIA Brings Housing Home in Roundtable with Senator Steve Daines

Bozeman – On Friday April 27, 2018 the Montana Building Industry Association (MBIA) and the Southwest Montana Building Industry Association (SWMBIA) hosted a roundtable discussion with Senator Steve Daines at Kenyon Noble Lumber and Hardware in Bozeman, Montana.

MBIA presented a prestigious Defender of Housing award to Senator Daines. The Defender of Housing award goes to members of Congress who have exemplified extraordinary effort in working at the Federal level to keep the engines of our construction industry going, remove barriers to affordable housing, and work to create a qualified workforce. Senator Daines, for the second time, won the award through his work in Congress. Sen. Daines father, Clair Daines, is a founding member of SWMBIA, and was present at the Bozeman meeting.

Both Clair and his son, Sen. Daines, relayed stories of the home-building industry in Montana going back decades. This background has helped Sen. Daines understand the difficulties in providing a key ingredient in Montana's growing economy – affordable housing.

Many issues critical to Montana's economy and construction industry were discussed, including the Softwood Lumber tariff, potential steel tariff, Federal Regulatory Reform, Workforce Development, Housing Finance Reform and the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program).

Senator Daines pledged to continue his work with MBIA and NAHB to grow and maintain housing as a priority in maintaining Montana's economy.

A topic of particular interest was the Softwood lumber tariff. Eugene Graf, a local member, discussed how lumber is one of the key materials used in building a new home, and has faced an increase of 60% since Jan. 1, 2016. NAHB estimates that lumber prices alone have resulted in an average increase in the cost of building a home by \$6,388. Senator Daines, MBIA and NAHB are working together to increase the timber production on U.S. Federal lands in order to help offset the increase in prices, as well as increase the jobs in the timber industry in Montana.

Also discussed was Workforce Development, a top issue facing Montana home builders. Conversation centered on how to highlight construction as a viable career in the early grades, as well as increasing the ability to finance vocational education. Local member Byron Anderson, pointed out that higher education is important, but we are missing a major sector of our economy by not emphasizing the availability of a large number of good, high-paying jobs in the construction industry.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was also discussed. NAHB is working towards a long-term extension of the program, which helps people purchase flood insurance. Montana builder Richard Smith, related how the redrawing of the flood plain maps jeopardizes homeownership as a dramatic increase in flood insurance rates dramatically increases housing costs.

The valuable importance of home building will be reiterated with a 'Bringing Housing Home' meeting scheduled with Montana Rep. Greg Gianforte, May 4th in Great Falls, Montana.

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