Introducing . . . Steelink!

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Steelink, the Ohio Steel Council’s new e-newsletter!

Comprised of steel producers, processors and suppliers, the Council serves as the voice of the steel industry in Ohio. Brenda Schulz, controller at Nucor Steel Marion, Inc., is the president and chairman of the Council. Brenda became involved with the Council at its founding in June 2011, after being active in the Council’s predecessor organization, the legislatively created Ohio Steel Industry Advisory Council, beginning back in 2009. From 2011 to early 2013, she served as treasurer of the Ohio Steel Council, and in December 2012, also assumed the responsibilities of president and chairman. Other Council officers include Emily Petrovich, government relations manager for U. S. Steel, who serves as secretary, and Jon Jarvis, vice president, finance, for Tata Steel, who serves as treasurer.

In the following Q&A, Brenda shares her thoughts about the Council’s work and some of the critical issues confronting the Ohio steel industry.

Q: What is the mission of the Ohio Steel Council?

A: First and foremost, our mission is to promote and strengthen Ohio’s steel industry. By promoting the benefits of a healthy steel sector, the Council strives to educate key constituents about the industry’s overall importance and significant economic impact in Ohio. One of the most important things we do is participate in the legislative process, through lobbying and other advocacy work, and provide insight on policy issues and their potential impact on Ohio’s steel industry, Ohio manufacturing and the state’s overall economy.

Q: What is the value to member companies of participating in the Council’s work?

A: At Nucor, we believe the manufacturing sector and the steel sector are the backbone of America. It’s important for us to be partners. When we are working collaboratively with companies that are our competitors, finding common ground on issues of concern to the industry, that alignment sends a strong message to the leadership in Columbus about how important certain issues must be to us if we are willing to come together as an industry and fight collectively.
Q: What major policy areas are of greatest concern to the Council’s members?

A: The Council’s work to date generally has focused on energy policy, environmental regulations, tax issues, budget issues and the impact of trade and import policies on our industry.

Q: Looking ahead, what are the biggest near-term challenges for the steel industry?

A: In my view, the two biggest challenges for the steel industry over the next few years are going to be energy and environmental concerns, particularly as they relate to carbon mitigation – both from a state and federal regulatory standpoint and from a power standpoint. Steel mills use a lot of power; however, our industry has made great strides in improving energy efficiency and we continue to innovate in this area. When people start talking about shutting down coal plants, that’s a big deal. Even though we are sitting on an abundance of natural gas, especially in the shale gas formations in Ohio and Pennsylvania, accessibility can be an issue. You don’t just drill and have it. It takes a lot of infrastructure and a lot of money to access those resources, and also a lot of money to convert plants to a different power source.

That’s why it is so important for our industry to have an ongoing open dialogue with agencies like the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and the Ohio EPA to talk about where our struggles are and what the agencies are trying to achieve from a regulatory standpoint, so we can find some middle ground. Working through an organization like the Ohio Steel Council is the best way for our industry to do that.

Q: What can you tell us about Steelink, the Council’s new e-newsletter?

A: Steelink was created to support the Council’s ongoing work to strengthen the steel industry in Ohio. We want it to be a useful tool for stakeholders to learn about critical issues affecting the steel industry, follow news about our member companies, and monitor the status of our ongoing policy work. We hope our readers enjoy the Steelink articles – while also learning about the importance of Ohio’s steel industry along the way!

For more information about the work of the Ohio Steel Council, check out our website, www.ohiosteel.org.

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