What's Happening in Masonry

by: Gary Porter

MASONRY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Concrete Masonry Check Off Program

In October of 2018, the United States Senate passed the Concrete Masonry Products Research, Education and Promotion Act, providing Congressional authorization for the concrete masonry products industry to develop its own commodity checkoff program to support needed industry initiatives like more research, marketing and sharing the benefits of concrete masonry. This was accomplished by many concrete block manufacturer and mason contractors making trips to Washington as well as meeting with our legislatures at their home offices and communicating to them the need for this checkoff program. Congressional leaders praised this group by the direction they took with their 300 plus co-sponsorship and the bipartisan support this group created.



What is a checkoff program?

Several commodity checkoff programs already exist. The existing programs relate to agricultural products under the management of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Several organizations are responsible for familiar American advertising campaigns, including "Milk Does a Body Good," the Got Milk? milk moustache series, "Pork. The Other White Meat", "The Incredible, Edible Egg", and "Beef: It's What's for Dinner." The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) oversees two such programs: propane and heating oil. Currently the wood industry, specifically softwood lumber has established a checkoff program. Concrete masonry would be the second construction related industry to implement such a program.

How does a checkoff program work?

In the United States, a commodity checkoff program collects funds through a checkoff mechanism, sometimes called checkoff dollars, from producers of a particular agricultural commodity or in this case concrete masonry producers and uses these funds to promote and do research on that particular commodity.

Does the concrete masonry industry need a checkoff program?

Yes. A check-off program is needed to enable our industry to regain market share. The check-off program will generate the funding to consistently provide the superior promotional activities required to position our products against competition. The programs, which will be directed to national, regional, and local markets, will help regain market share and new business. From the smallest to the largest regardless of geographic location, concrete block manufacturers will see a benefit from this program.

Here is what experts in the industry are saying: Each of these individuals have played important parts spending a lot of personal and business hours meeting and going before house and congressional leaders to try and influence the concrete masonry checkoff program and the great benefits it will bring to this industry and the future of our country.

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Concrete Masonry Checkoff Program (cont.)

NCMA President Robert Thomas maintains that the real winner through this congressional action is the general public. “People in this country deserve to live, work, shop, and learn in buildings that are resilient and durable. If we are successful, there will be more structures locally sourced, manufactured and constructed, creating more American jobs. These structures will be thoughtfully built with “strength,” resulting in more fire-resistant, energy-efficient, and cost effective buildings that do not rot, burn, or decay.”

“This is a great day for our industry,” said Major Ogilvie of CEMEX USA, national chair of the concrete masonry checkoff initiative since 2010. “We demonstrated a level of perseverance on this initiative that is only matched by the resilience of the products that we manufacture. By standing together, we will not only strengthen our industry, but our communities. We applaud the members of Congress for recognizing that the small businesses in our industry can accomplish even greater things together if we can more effectively pool our resources to promote ourselves.”

“Our work is just beginning,” said National Concrete Masonry Association Chairman of the Board Kent Waide of Ruby Concrete. “Congress did not create a concrete masonry checkoff program, they only authorized it. Our entire industry will now begin the earnest discussions about how we develop a program that is meaningful to concrete block manufacturers of all kinds – those large and small, those in all regions of the U.S., and those with all kinds of local market interests. We will present the value proposition to rationalize an increased investment to collectively promote the value of concrete masonry systems.”

Currently there are other states with checkoff programs in Florida and Arizona. At this point we do not know what will happen in those states and their individual programs or if the two programs will function simultaneously.

This is an exciting step for the concrete masonry industry! The direction this program takes, the planning, the organization of new programs for marketing and promoting concrete masonry is still evolving. The Masonry Advisory Council will keep you informed with updates as we here more good news and detailed plans.

