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Nordstrom, Omni Hotels, and Sysco Corp. Join Alliance

The list of companies joining the Alliance continues to grow as more Texas businesses are recognizing the importance of supporting efforts to preserve their nonsubscription choice. Nordstrom, Omni Hotels, and Sysco Corp. are among a dozen companies who have recently joined the Alliance adding to the already impressive list of members which include some of the state's top employers.

"We could not be more pleased with the growth of both our regular and associate members who will help us amplify the voice of nonsubscription interests in Texas," said Ellen Buckley of the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society and chair of the Alliance's membership committee.

"Those joining are doing so to ensure that nonsubscribers are in the best possible position to respond to any changes that might impact or erode their right to manage their companies' occupational injury process. The more members we have, the greater our ability to educate legislators on nonsubscription," added Buckley.

The Texas Alliance of Nonsubscribers is a nonprofit trade association comprised of responsible employers committed exclusively to protecting the right of Texas businesses to manage their occupational injury claims through nonsubscription from the Texas workers' compensation system. Regular membership is available to nonsubscribing companies which have an occupational injury benefits plan in place. Associate membership is open to individuals, corporations, and firms providing products or services to nonsubscribers or to those who have an interest retaining the current voluntary workers' compensation system in Texas but are not eligible to be regular members.

For more information on membership, you may contact the Alliance office at 512-542-3389.

Top Texas Trade Associations Joining Alliance Advisory Council

Some of Texas' leading trade associations have joined the newly formed Texas Alliance of Nonsubscribers Advisory Council. The addition of these associations to the advisory council continues the momentum the Alliance has built since its formation earlier this year.

The Council will serve as the key link between the Alliance and organizations with an interest in nonsubscription. It will help facilitate the coordination between organizations on the communication and legislative outreach efforts

focused on educating legislators on nonsubscription. The coordination will help nonsubscribers unify their messages on the benefits of their programs.

Those joining the advisory council include the Texas Association of Business, Texas Hospital Association, Texas Restaurant Association, Texas Retailers Association, National Federation of Independent Businesses, Texas Self-Insurance Association, and the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association.

“Interest in supporting the Alliance continues to grow. We are pleased to have some of our state’s most respected trade associations joining our efforts to educate legislators on the importance of nonsubscription for their members and their members’ employees,” said Jai Sharma, Alliance Secretary.

Alliance Member Hosts Legislative Staff Delegation

A delegation of key legislative staff members recently participated in a nonsubscription orientation tour of the James Avery Craftsman facility in Kerrville. Alliance Co-Chair Margaret Greenshield led the tour which provided an overview of how the company’s nonsubscription process works, as well as insight into the benefits the company provides its employees and the community.

“We believe opening our doors to the legislature is the best possible way to demonstrate how and why nonsubscription works for employees and employers. We are very proud of our safety record and the process and care that is available should an injured employee need it,” said Greenshield.

The tour included staff members from the offices of Senator Troy Fraser, Rep. Burt Solomons, Rep. Larry Taylor, and Rep. Myra Crownover. Other Alliance members will be conducting similar orientation tours. Those members who have not already indicated their desire to host a tour may do so by contacting Kim Gutierrez at 512-542-3389.

Bonnie Bruce, of Rep. Burt Solomons’ office, shared her observations following the tour.

"I was impressed with the depth of concern that James Avery shows for the safety of their employees. Their dedication to preventing injuries and to quality medical care provides a great example of how nonsubscription works," said Bruce.

Bruce added, “The Alliance chose an excellent company for legislative staff to learn from about nonsubscription.”

An interview with State Representative Patrick Rose



State Representative Patrick Rose is serving his second term as a member of the Texas House of Representatives. He is Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Civil Practices and also serves as a member of the Higher Education and Calendars Committees. Representative Rose is recognized as a leader in fostering economic opportunities and job growth in Texas. His legislative district includes Blanco, Caldwell, and Hays counties.

Q-You recently announced the formation of the Manufacturer's Legislative Caucus. What was the reason for the group's formation and what will be its focus?

A- The Texas Manufacturer's Caucus is a bi-partisan, geographically-diverse group of legislators who care about how state policy affects the manufacturing community and its ability to grow and provide jobs. The caucus, which now has over 100 members, will focus on fostering the kind of business climate in our state that will provide for the protection and expansion of the manufacturing jobs critical to so many of our local economies.

Q-The Legislature passed major workers' compensation reform during the 2005 session. Do you have any thoughts you would like to share with the Alliance members about those reforms and the expected improvements to the system that are envisioned?

A- The reforms were an important first step to reduce business costs, improve the quality of health care provided to injured workers, and streamline the workers' compensation system for all parties. Chairman Burt Solomons took the lead on the effort which started months before the last session. Because of the great work of the Sunset Advisory Commission that he chaired, the Legislature was able to consider reforms that he championed and passed along with Senator Todd Staples.

As a member of the conference committee that worked on the reforms, I felt strongly that the system had to be improved in order to encourage more businesses to provide workers' compensation coverage for their employees. I also felt it was important that we keep the system voluntary and allow those businesses that choose to be nonsubscribers the ability to continue to manage their own occupational injury plans.

Our goal of increasing coverage while reducing costs is good business for Texas. I am confident the reforms have put us on that track.

Q-While addressing a nonsubscriber conference last year, one of your colleagues suggested nonsubscribers could be more effective in educating legislators if they organized their efforts. His comments were a motivating factor behind the Alliance's creation. Do you have advice for the Alliance as it works to increase the Legislature's knowledge on the role of nonsubscription in our state?

A- One of the most important steps an industry can take is to come together and organize so that you can serve as a resource to the legislature and express your viewpoint. When I served on the conference committee for House Bill 7 (workers' compensation reforms), I really didn't hear from the nonsubscriber community. That's pretty amazing considering there was so much at stake.

I tell folks, if you are a dues paying member of an organization with the goal of educating legislators and you haven't met with your legislators, then it's probably time you do so. I have already met with members of your organization and benefited from the insight they shared with me about their operations and the nonsubscription process. Legislators need and want that kind of information. We welcome the Alliance as a resource on nonsubscription issues.

Q-What do you see as the greatest challenge for the nonsubscriber community?

A- We are expecting one of the largest freshmen classes of legislators in recent years. Over twenty-five house members and several new senators will need to be briefed on an array of issues ranging from healthcare to business taxes. Ensuring that they have the proper perspective on nonsubscription will be important given all of the other information they will be expected to absorb. Your timing in organizing your efforts is excellent and will likely benefit not only your members but also legislators who want to know about how nonsubscription works.

Q-What do you envision as the major issues to be addressed when the Legislature convenes in 2007?

A- You will likely see some minor tweaking to the school finance reforms that passed during the special session. This is not unusual after the adoption and implementation of major legislation. I think health care, water, higher education and criminal justice issues will also receive a great deal of attention. And, of course the state budget will always be the dominant topic.

Q-Are there any specific business issues you would recommend employers focus on as the session approaches?

A- I think issues affecting the cost of health care and the affordability of higher education will be critical.

As I said earlier in referencing the Manufacturers Caucus, identifying how we can foster and fuel a strong business climate benefits employers, employees,

local economies, and our schools. I look forward to continuing our work together in January.

An interview with Alliance Co-Chair Beth Huntington, Director of Risk Management for Baylor Health Care System.

Q-As a leader of the Alliance can you outline the reasons why the organization was formed and why a business should join?

A- During a conference last year, one of our state's leading legislators suggested that nonsubscribers could do a better job of educating the Legislature on how nonsubscription works. A number of businesses agreed and felt it was important to heed the advice of this respected lawmaker. As we discussed the possibility of forming the organization, it became very clear to us that there is a great deal at stake and that it is important that we not only increase our outreach to key legislators but that we be ready and united to respond to any proposals that might erode the option of nonsubscription during the 2007 session.

By joining the Alliance, a business is taking a proactive approach to preserving their nonsubscription choice and reducing the chances that it might go away. The more Alliance members we have sharing their stories, the stronger our ability to preserve nonsubscription in Texas.

Q-The Alliance is still in its early stages of forming. Are you pleased with the progress so far?

A- It has been a very busy few months and we could not be more pleased. Membership continues to grow. We have had very productive meetings with the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker's offices as well as with other legislative leaders. Some of the state's leading trade associations have agreed to serve on the Alliance advisory council. We were asked as an organization to participate in a project with the Research and Evaluation Group at the Texas Department of Insurance. We just recently completed hosting our first legislative orientation tour of a nonsubscriber facility with staff members of several key legislators.

We have been very well-received on all fronts. I think its safe to say that the success and receptiveness that we have experienced reinforces the need to do what we are doing and that is to focus on connecting with and educating the Legislature on the nonsubscription process.

Q-What's next as we approach the 2007 session?

A- We will continue focusing on membership recruitment while preparing existing members to reach out to their respective legislators. We are planning additional legislative visits as well as orientation tours of nonsubscriber facilities. We will be working with our newly formed Advisory Council to increase linkage between other nonsubscriber stakeholders. We will be tracking legislation that is filed to ensure we are well positioned to respond to any proposals that might adversely impact nonsubscription.

Because of its relatively short length, the session is fast-paced and things

can happen very quickly. We've learned if you do not have the relationships in place and if you are not well-positioned to utilize those relationships you can spend most of the session trying to dig yourself out of a hole. We will be spending the next six months very wisely as we reach out to our legislative friends and educate them on how nonsubscription works.



The Texas Alliance of Nonsubscribers

An employer-driven, nonprofit trade association dedicated to ensuring that nonsubscription interests are better prepared, more cohesive, and strategically proactive in preserving their choice to manage occupational injury claims.

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