

Q & A With American Trucking Associations (ATA) Chairman Tommy Hodges

The American Trucking Associations (ATA) recently elected Tommy Hodges, chairman of Titan Transfer, Shelbyville, TN, as its 2010 Chairman. Hodges, who has driven trucks and owned trucking companies for most of his working life, started Titan Transfer in 2000 as a companion to his company Goggin Warehousing, a privately owned warehousing and distribution services company. Hodges has also been very active in the IWLA, serving on several of its various committees and also on its board of directors. We recently asked Tommy a few questions on the direction of ATA and his priorities for the association over the course of the next year.

Q - What are your top 2 to 3 priorities as ATA Chairman in the upcoming year?

A - I would like to see our association become more proactive in developing changes that could be made to make our businesses run smoother and operate more efficiently. I think it is important that we continue to communicate with the American public about the very nature of the industry, our essential nature, our willingness to do our fair share to clean up the environment, and the fact that we are dedicated to safety. Our record supports that statement.

Q - How important is highway reauthorization now that the previous highway bill has expired?

A - The Highway Reauthorization Bill is the BIG issue for American truckers. We have to address our aging infrastructure and be willing to spend more resources to fix bridges, improve highways, build more capacity, and fix poorly designed bottlenecks, which cost all Americans extra dollars when they get in traffic jams and are truly a waste of our country's resources. ATA has worked hard to have a "seat at the table" as the bill is being crafted so that the industry's best interests are not overlooked or omitted. I hope to do all I can to make sure that we have the best possible outcome for all the stakeholders.

Q - What are some of the main government affairs issues that you'll be tackling on Capitol Hill in the next year or so on behalf of the ATA?

A - With the change in administrations in Washington, there are several issues for which we must be on guard and the ways they might impact our businesses. Of course, the Highway Reauthorization Bill is first and foremost on our list and ATA has positioned the trucking industry well to be a "major player" as the bill continues to move through congress. Health care, Employee Free Choice Act, independent owner-operator status, CVS 2010 implementation, hours of service rule rewrite, and cap and trade are all issues that could impact how we do business and our ability to sustain ourselves.

Q - In today's fast-paced and technologically advanced environment, what methods of communication does ATA use to keep its membership regularly informed on "hot issues" directly affecting them?

A - At ATA today we are using more and more advanced technology to help the membership stay up to date with the fast-paced changes that are occurring. A prime example of this is the use of webinars to help members understand issues and help educate companies on the impact of new regulations and laws. We continue to use traditional emails and blast fax's to help our members stay abreast of late-breaking information as well. We are constantly working on being

more effective at making sure that all of our members have the latest and most current information, so they can run their businesses as efficiently as possible.

Q - Anything else that you'd like to add?

A - I would encourage everyone out there to get involved in their trade association. The business climate in Washington has changed, and we all need help to stay abreast of the changes in regulations and impending laws. We can't go it alone. Get active and get engaged because that is the only way that our business voice will be heard, and association involvement is the most cost-effective way to do it. Keep on trucking and warehousing!