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IFI Lobbyist: U.S. Tariffs Here to Stay

The Industrial Fastener Institute retained Lauren Baker as a lobbyist in 1996 to handle U.S. Fastener Quality Act amendments. ***"I don't see much appetite for free trade," Baker said of the current U.S. Congress.*** "President Trump honestly believes in tariffs. Members of Congress find it "difficult to vocally oppose the president," Baker finds. Members "won't say anything publicly. They can't be out front."

Baker referred to tariffs as "a tax on U.S. companies," even though tariffs are officially paid by the importer of record. The tariffs will be dollars coming out of U.S. economy, Baker said. Ultimately, rather than just tariffs, "it's the market which will determine if we get some re-shoring in the next three to five years,"

Expect energy prices to increase for manufacturers, Baker predicted. With President Trump cutting federal funding "solar and wind projects are stalled," Baker said, adding nuclear power projects will take a decade to come online. Trump particularly doesn't like wind power. When Joe Biden was president he subsided solar and wind projects. Baker suggested "let's use it all" on the variety of energy systems.

Any growth in domestic manufacturing in increase demand for energy and thus costs, he pointed out. "China is on the mind all the time," Baker said of the Washington DC mood. China and tariffs are a "balancing act right now." Related issues are intellectual property and software imbedded in products.

"We don't want to piss them off," Baker said in reference to China. Will Trump's tariff war bring back manufacturing? "That's a very good question," Baker responded. Baker noted "there are some efforts to reduce the regulatory burden on U.S. manufacturers," which could help re-shoring.

In 2002 then-president George W. Bush's steel tariffs on Canada were eventually lifted because the U.S." didn't have enough capacity" to replace Canada's supply, Baker noted. Baker finds members of Congress are seriously divided in 2025. "For most of my career there was willingness by conservatives and liberals to work together in Congress." He cited President Ronald Reagan and House Speaker Tip O'Neal socializing and working together in the 1980s. Today the political parties working together is "now the exception, not the rule," Baker lamented.

The original U.S. Fastener Quality Act was passed in 1990 and was "unworkable." The original target was fraudulent imported fasteners, but the first version of the fastener law "created more problems than it solved," Baker said. The law "mandated testing and certification using outdated procedures that the Industry had moved beyond." Implementation was handed to the Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards & Technology. "Eight years later, rules were still not written," Baker said. In those days, the IFI "did not have the ability to engage with policymakers," but jumped in to find solutions, Baker said. Other industry organizations participated too.

> *Tariffs are here to stay unless the U.S. economy implodes or "when the pain gets too hard to ignore," lobbyist Lauren Baker told the Mid-West Fastener Association. "Domestic prices will go up" as a result of tariffs, he added. There is still some question about tariffs on raw material, Baker said.*

Congress postponed the FQA twice. The industry coalition worked what in 1999 became PL 106-34. "We drafted what we wanted," Baker recalled. The fastener industry's efforts turned the FQA into "a fraud law." Baker advocated working with Congress and not waiting to respond to legislation. He noted there are an average of 75 new members on Congress after each election. Each House district averages 750,000 people. Baker suggested inviting especially new members for plant tours. It helps avoid members "regulating that which they don't understand." It is "hard to demonize someone they know," Baker said of developing relationships with members of Congress.

In defense of lobbying, Baker noted the frequent quote: "If you aren't at the table, you are on the menu." Industries can reject lobbying, "If you are willing to accept whatever decisions get made," Baker said. "There is still a room where it happens and you still need to be in it."

SPS Technologies to Rebuild Pennsylvania Factory

Nine months after a massive fire destroyed the SPS Technologies manufacturing plant outside Philadelphia, the company announced to construct a new aerospace fastener facility the same site, PhillyVoice reports.

SPS officials will unveil renderings and details about the planned factory. SPS had about 475 workers at the time of the February 17 fire, but around 250 employees were laid off in March.

The fire started after an explosion at the century-old facility. About 60 workers who were inside the building at the start of the four-alarm blaze escaped safely. A second explosion the next morning in a different section of the facility prompted a shelter-in-place order within a mile radius. Nearly 70 fire companies from the region responded to the fire, which took six days to extinguish. The cause of the fire still remains under investigation.

SPS officials have not said how the construction of a new factory would be funded or when the company aims to complete a new facility, PhillyVoice reports. After the fire, U.S. Rep. Madeleine Dean (D-Pa.) said she would seek federal support for the factory to be rebuilt in Abington Township. SPS is owned by Berkshire Hathaway subsidiary Precision Castparts Corp., and has received numerous federal contracts from the U.S. Department of Defense.

Mark Korba to COO of Optimas Americas

Mark Korba

Optimas Solutions named Mark Korba Chief Operating Officer (COO) for Optimas Americas. In this new role, he will oversee Business Intelligence, Marketing/New Business Development, Operations, Strategy and Supply Chain across the Americas region. In his prior roles as Chief of Staff/VP, Business Intelligence, Korba demonstrated exceptional leadership and operational expertise, and the company looks forward to his continued impact in this expanded role.

Van Handel Heads Wrought Washer

Van Handel

Wrought Washer Mfg. hired Ian Van Handel as president and CEO. He replaces Jeff Liter, who retired on October 30. "Ian brings a proven track record of leading organizations through growth, innovation, and operational excellence. His leadership style reflects our values—focused on people, partnerships, and performance," Wrought Washer stated. Previously Van Handel served as an investor member of Cincinnati-based Queen City Angels, a group of accredited investors.

Founded in 1887, Milwaukee-based Wrought Washer is the world's largest manufacturer of standard and special washers for automotive, agricultural, electrical, appliance, construction equipment, and material handling markets.

Century Names Gomez for Mexico

Saúl Pedraza Gómez

Century Fasteners de México hired Saúl Pedraza Gómez as a regional sales manager. H Gomez will report to Bob Botticelli, director of business development. Gómez brings over 20 years of commercial, industrial, and aerospace fastening experience to Century Fasteners de Mexico. He holds a degree in mechanical and electrical engineering from the Instituto Politecnico Nacional.

Century Fasteners de Mexico, a subsidiary of Century Fasteners Corp., distributes fasteners and consumable products to aerospace, commercial/industrial, and electronic manufacturing sectors. Founded in 1955, New York-based Century Fasteners is a master distributor of fasteners and other components.

Steel Dynamics Acquires New Process Metal Solutions

Vulcan Steel Products parent company Steel Dynamics, Inc. has agreed to acquire the remaining 55% equity interest in New Process Steel, L.P. ***The deal expands Steel Dynamics' exposure to value-added manufacturing, enhances its supply-chain capabilities, and solidifies its longstanding relationship with its largest flat roll steel customer.***

Founded in 1906 as a small sheet metal shop in Dallas, TX, New Process Steel processes and distributes carbon steel products in North America. The transaction, which includes New Process Steel's six manufacturing facilities in the U.S. and Mexico and its 1,275 employees, is pending customary closing conditions and regulatory approval.

Founded in 1993, Fort Wayne, IN-based Steel Dynamics is one of the largest U.S. steel producers and metal recyclers in the U.S., with additional facilities in Mexico.

Novaria Acquires Precision Aero Corp.

Novaria Group has acquired Precision Aero Corp. (PAC), a subsidiary of Precision Products Machining Group, LLC , for an undisclosed sum. Ohio-based PAC manufactures fusible plugs and specialty aftermarket components for aerospace wheels.

> *"PAC's technical expertise and proprietary products enhance our ability to serve key customers and expand our portfolio of safety-critical components," stated Novaria CEO Bryan Perkins.*

Under Novaria, PAC will continue operating from its Troy, OH facility and site-level leadership will remain the same. North Richland Hills, TX-based Novaria is a privately held business focused on fasteners, precision components and service companies for aerospace and defense markets.

MacLean-Fogg Partners to 3D Print Casting Tool Insert

> *MacLean-Fogg Company (MFC) partnered with Fraunhofer Institute for Laser Technology ILT (Fraunhofer ILT) to create the largest 3D-printed nearly solid die casting tooling insert in the world, 156 kg (350 lbs), for Toyota Europe's Yaris hybrid transmission housing.*

MACLEAN-FOGG

A conformally cooled insert, allegedly the largest in the world, was produced using Fraunhofer ILT's gantry-type, multi-laser Laser Powder Bed Fusion (LPBF) machine with MacLean-Fogg's patented L-40 tool steel powder. A hybrid process was utilized to reduce costs. "Gantry printing with L-40 tool steel powder material, a promising avenue towards scalable additive manufacturing, is opening the potential for metal 3D printing to reduce lead times and to realize more responsive manufacturing— in particular while delivering world-class insert performance, longer maintenance intervals, and cost-effective pricing structure," said Dr. Magdalena Coventry and Dr. Andrew Willett, Toyota Europe.

MacLean-Fogg's L-40 powder was specifically designed for the LPBF process to achieve high hardness and toughness, minimizing crack formation and crack propagation even when printing at moderate pre-heat temperatures. Compared to conventional tool steels, L-40 also reduces the need for advanced post-build heat treatments, further decreasing time-to-market. Additional benefits include: Reduced soldering of aluminum to the tooling surface; approximately twice the lifespan of conventional aluminum die-casting inserts; lower overall tooling maintenance requirements; high sustainability, with no cobalt and a minimal amount of nickel.

"Toyota posed a thrilling challenge by requesting to expand the application of L-40 to large-format tooling inserts," explained Dr. Harald Lemke, MacLean-Fogg director of product development. "We had to overcome scale-up challenges such as ensuring consistent gas flow conditions as build sizes grew." Fraunhofer ILT addressed these requirements with its gantry-type, five-laser LPBF system, which allows for the processing of parts longer than 50 cm in side length and chamber temperatures of up to 200°C. ***MacLean-Fogg and Fraunhofer ILT aim to expand the technology into structural die casting, inserts for giga-casting tools, and other large hot- or cold-forming tools where traditional powders have not yet been validated. All these are consistent with broader trends in the automotive industry towards lightweighting, shorter development times, and local supply chain resilience.*** ■