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AMERICAN BUSINESS MEDIA VISITS CAPITOL HILL

Postmaster General John Potter, in his 90-minute appearance at American Business Media's Washington Forum last week, pledged to continue his cost-containment efforts--including closing unneeded facilities and reducing the USPS workforce. But he cautioned that such changes need to be done "quietly" to lessen the risk of raising a firestorm of protest in Congress. Potter's candid discussion of the Postal Service was a rare and valuable opportunity for ABM members, considering that Potter heads an institution that provides \$300 million worth of services to ABM member companies annually.

Potter's talk at the Washington Forum was followed by a panel discussion on postal reform. We heard from Dennis Shea, who was Executive Director of the President's Commission on the USPS; Roger Kodat, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury responsible for postal issues; and Robert Taub, Chief of Staff for Congressman John McHugh, the leader of the postal reform movement on Capitol Hill. Shea and Kodat agreed that cost control was a critical part of the Commission's recommendations--as did the luncheon speaker Robert Walker, a key member of the Commission--but Taub, not surprisingly, wouldn't pledge that Congress would follow through.

Gordon Hughes, ABM's president and CEO, said after the Forum, "It's clear that unless the executive branch pushes postal reform, it won't happen." He added that ABM is developing a strategic approach for getting the support of the executive branch to make postal reform a reality.

Next was an update on the war against faxes, emails and telemarketers by David Straus, ABM's postal counsel; the latest on the privacy front, by McGraw-Hill's vp-Washington affairs, Cindy Braddon; and a review of the prospects for database protection legislation, by Keith Kupferschmid of the Software and Information Industry Association. All agreed that the assault on advertising will be difficult to contain, and that database protection legislation is still far-off.

After a brief tutorial on the do's and don'ts of congressional visits--e.g. stay on message, keep the meeting to 15 minutes, ask for a tangible sign of support--ABM members visited the Hill to meet with members of the House and Senate committees, including Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), George Voinovich (R-OH) and Representative Candice Miller (R-MI).

"The Washington Forum was an eye-opening exchange with Senate and House members," said Gary Fitzgerald, president of Meister Publishing, who was one of the 30-plus attendees to the invitation-only event. ABM hopes to have more frequent Washington meetings to ensure that the voice of the b-to-b media industry continues to be heard on Capitol Hill.

Our thanks to [RR Donnelley](#) for sponsoring the Washington Forum dinner, held on Sept. 29 at the Willard Intercontinental in Washington, DC.