

On The Hill
By Kevin Bliss

Spring has arrived in Washington and we're a short week or so away from the annual blooming of the cherry blossoms and baseball in a brand new stadium. Opening day is March 30 and hopes are high that the Washington Nationals will field its most competitive team since relocating to Washington.

Spring weather, including showers, greeted IOGCC official representatives attending the annual spring meeting in Washington, March 6-8. This month's column will focus largely on the meeting, held again this year in conjunction with the Energy Council, which represents legislators from energy producing states and provinces. This year's meeting was a particularly good one, with interesting speakers and good attendance.

Our IOGCC agenda began on March 6, with our annual Capitol Hill briefing and the opportunity for our official representatives to visit the Hill for meetings with congressmen, senators and their staffs. The briefing was held this year in a conference room at the law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld, where the IOGCC Washington office is now located. Attendees were able to see the new office prior to heading up to the 10th floor conference room for the briefing. One of the amenities of the IOGCC arrangement with the law firm is the ability to reserve conference rooms as needed. Thank you to the state of Oklahoma for making this all possible.

Last month's "On the Hill" column detailed a number of the issues likely to be of concern to oil and natural gas producing states in 2008. The focus of our briefing was those issues. They included:

1. Net receipts sharing.
2. The assault on American domestic energy resources, including:
 - a. Attempts to repeal EPACT Hydraulic Fracturing and Stormwater exemption provisions;
 - b. Efforts to disadvantage oil and natural gas as part of environmental or climate change legislation;
 - c. Perennial efforts to reduce critical funding for the Department of Energy's Office of Fossil Energy for oil and natural gas research and development;
 - d. Threats to remove the RCRA exemption.
3. Geologic Storage of Carbon Dioxide.

IOGCC official representatives were supplied with talking points on each of the above issues as well as more detailed background information. The official representatives also were supplied with materials, including IOGCC publications, to leave with the congressional offices visited. By all reports the briefing and subsequent visits were most successful.

One of the things our members asked in their meetings with senators was that the senators sign a letter opposing net receipts sharing. The letter was addressed to Chairman

Dianne Feinstein and Ranking Member Wayne Allard of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. Thanks to the hard work of Senators Jeff Bingaman and Michael Enzi in sponsoring the letter and our members in bringing the letter to the attention of those offices visited, the letter was sent last week signed by 13 senators.

Following the Hill visits, IOGCC and the Energy Council hosted the annual Congressional Reception. One of the great things about meeting with the Energy Council is that it gives our representatives an opportunity to build and reinforce relationships with key legislators in their home states. The Congressional Reception is perhaps the best opportunity of the weekend to do this.

The substantive meetings took place on Friday and Saturday mornings. The Friday session led off with a great presentation by Sen. Bingaman, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. As chairman, Bingaman is a key player on all energy and climate change legislation considered in this Congress. We are lucky to have someone as knowledgeable and friendly to oil and natural gas producing states as Bingaman at the helm of this important committee.

Also addressing the group Friday morning was Premier Brad Wall of the Province of Saskatchewan. Wall is newly elected and in an opening address eloquently communicated his energy vision for Saskatchewan. As it happened, the IOGCC at its business meeting on Saturday afternoon approved Saskatchewan's application to join the IOGCC as an international affiliate. Following additional presentations Friday morning, the luncheon speaker was Dr. Daniel Yergin, the noted energy analyst and author of the book "The Prize." He shared his insights into the current energy market.

Carl Bauer, director of the National Energy Technology Laboratory, kicked off Saturday's meeting. Bauer gave a fascinating and well-received presentation that outlined some disturbing energy trends that need to be addressed by public policymakers. Other presentations included the subjects of carbon capture and sequestration, "energy and wildlife," and a nuclear fuel infrastructure update.