Democracy usually involves many diverse, conflicting voices. That’s a good thing, and those of us in the forest industry simply have to work to make sure our voice is one of those heard loud and clear.

We’re not politicians and don’t want to be. Our focus is on running our businesses — on making a living for ourselves, our families, and our employees, but life isn’t always simple. In one form or another, government intrudes in the form of taxes, regulations, and legislation.

Even the most well-intentioned of laws can have unintended consequences. Ask anyone who has discovered an endangered species on his or her property, or who has tried to hang on to his or her family’s business in the face of unexpected estate taxes.

What can we do? As citizens of a free, democratic country, we can get involved and make a difference. We can learn about the issues, vote, and follow-up by communicating with our elected officials.

Now what are we doing as an association? In addition to setting the rules and providing training in them, NHLA is the industry’s voice — your and my voice — on issues that can impact the bottom line, such as LEED building standards and making estate tax repeal permanent. NHLA does this directly by meeting with public officials in Washington, as well as indirectly through the Hardwood Federation and Hardwood Federation PAC.

We are steadily getting our message out that forests are a renewable, sustainable resource, and thankfully our voice is increasingly being heard.

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