

BAIL AGENTS TAKING ACTION

By Jessica Jamerson



North Carolina Senator
Tom Apodaca

With his plate full as a busy state senator and a successful bail agent, North Carolina Senator Tom Apodaca can probably breathe a little easier now. The start of a new administration brings with it high hopes for positive, nationwide change in the world of commercial bail.

Despite his hectic schedule, the senator made the time to answer questions about his role in politics and seemed to welcome the chance to relive some memories. His fatherly pride was evident when he spoke of his son, Brandon, who is a fourth-generation bail agent. Brandon joins a long line of bail agents in his family and works for the family company, & Bonding. The senator chuckled when asked what made him run for political office. "Becoming a bail agent prompted my interest in politics," he answered, adding that he had been active in local government throughout the 1980s and 1990s by lobbying for legislation that would support his industry.

"I'd never thought about running for office until 2002." The exact same year he unseated the 27-year incumbent. Perhaps even more impressive, he has run unopposed for the last two elections."

Senator Apodaca is the first bail agent to be elected to political office. However, bail agents throughout the country are also taking a very active role in government and are the voice of the bail industry.

This fact rings true in light of last year's historic election, in which three additional bail agents were elected to state legislatures.

One of the youngest candidates, Justin P. Burr was elected to North Carolina's House of Representatives. With Senator Apodaca actively supporting Burr's candidacy and having been raised in a family bail business dating back to 1952, Burr recognizes his unique chance to promote the betterment of commercial bail. "I've been involved in government for a long time. But, as a bail agent, I see my position as a good opportunity to help find solutions to fix problems that affect our industry."

In addition to his position in state government and work as a licensed bail agent, Burr is a member of the North Carolina Bail Agents Association (NCBAA) and the Surety Guild. The guild is active in the passing of state legislation related to commercial bail.



North Carolina Representative
Justin P. Burr

With his firsthand knowledge of the prominent role of state legislators in making and enacting legislation, Burr hopes to educate fellow agents about the importance of getting involved: "As a bail agent, it's important to have a clear understanding of the judicial and legislative systems."

Recognizing there are two sides to the coin, Burr promises to give his input and support the industry whenever there is an opportunity by spreading the word about the advantages of commercial bail to his fellow legislators. In doing so, Burr looks to present issues related to bail on an even front and clear up stereotypes and confusion associated with the industry.

Though he views his position as a positive platform for change, the health of North Carolina's bail industry faces several challenges. "There are programs within the current judicial system, namely pre-trial release or bail

programs managed by the state & that are a waste of taxpayer dollars." Burr asserts that doing away with such programs will not only benefit his fellow bail agents, but also save the taxpayers in his state from seeing their money spent on ineffective solutions to real problems such as jail overcrowding and recidivism. With his knowledge and experience, Burr will certainly have a significant impact on the future of the commercial bail industry.



South Dakota Representative
Dan Lederman

A new member of South Dakota's House of Representatives, Dan Lederman thoroughly understands the importance of state legislation and encourages his fellow agents to rally behind supportive legislation. An industry veteran, Lederman has been a licensed bail agent for 15 years and his family has been in the business for three generations. With his three brothers continuing to operate Lederman Bonding Company, founded by their father in 1965, Lederman is taking an energetic approach to his new office.

Also a new member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), Lederman stresses the importance of joining organizations that have a strong impact, not just in one's home state, but nationwide. "There are a lot of issues that ALEC touches on that matter to South Dakota, from higher education funding to healthcare," he stated.

"That's why ALEC is so good - you see what's happening in other states and with the economy."

In December, Lederman attended his first ALEC meeting, the ALEC States and Nation Policy Summit, in December where he learned about the benefits of post-conviction bonds from AIA's Chief Legal Officer, Jerry Watson. Upon the passage of necessary legislation, post-conviction bonds would be issued to eligible inmates who are connected to the system through those bonds, which are guaranteed through a surety company.

These types of bonds would, in effect, reduce jail overcrowding and keep released prisoners accountable for their actions. Lederman is eager to see such positive legislation for the industry at work in South Dakota. "I'd never heard about post-conviction bonds," he said. "It's a new concept to me, but I plan on taking action on it in our own state."

Curt Hagman was a featured speaker at the California Bail Agents Association convention last October where he spoke about his role as both a bail agent and a member of the State Assembly of California. A licensed bail agent for more than 20 years and President and CEO of Apex Bail Bonds, Inc., in Southern California, Hagman's experience and knowledge of the industry allow him to confidently discuss the challenges facing the bail industry.

He describes his career in bail as a livelihood that began with a part-time position as an investigator when he was a college student at UCLA. However, he ran for political office as a way to develop his passion for volunteering for organizations such as the Kiwanis Club, where he served as President and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.



California Assemblyman
Curt Hagman

As an assemblyman, Hagman has taken office with a strong agenda and views his responsibility in office as a two-fold job: uniting California bail agents to educate the public about the benefits of commercial bail and working with fellow legislators on post-conviction bonds for the state. By doing away with stereotypes associated with the bail industry, Hagman hopes to encourage the public to view bail agents in a more accurate light: as professional insurance agents that provide a useful public resource. As he sees it, California bail agents need to present a united front and educate the public on huge public safety issues that commercial bail addresses.

Through post-conviction bonds, Hagman hopes to avoid government-run release programs, yet still clean up overcrowded jails quickly. He suggests that bail agents make donations to candidates who support legislation in favor of commercial bail and to educate legislators on the importance of commercial bail in California and across the country.

"Being here in Sacramento, I bring a different perspective to those who don't understand how bail works."

Senator Apodaca and his newly elected colleagues are models in the bail industry showing the importance of getting politically involved and staying informed. Indeed, Senator Apodaca echoed the opinions of his colleagues that the positive relationship between commercial bail and politics is not only present, but becoming stronger. "I believe our industry has a bright future and I hope every bail agent will call their state representative to discuss the positives of commercial bail. In fact, I am seeing more and more of that happening already."