



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE PATRICK McHENRY VISITS HOTCHKIS SPORT SUSPENSION

»» By Eric Snyder

When Congress is out of session, lawmakers are basically on vacation, right? Despite what many people think, the answer in most cases is no. On the days that the U.S. House of Representatives isn't conducting official business in Washington, D.C., there's a good chance that Congressman Patrick McHenry (R-NC) is busy meeting with local businesses and their employees to keep his finger on the pulse of the most pressing issues facing the communities he represents.

As the lead sponsor of the Recognizing the Protection of Motorsports Act (RPM Act), Rep. McHenry's visit to Hotchkis Sport Suspension in Mooresville, North Carolina, served both as a homecoming and an opportunity to discuss the most pressing issues facing aftermarket and racing businesses.

As the Congressman for North Carolina's 10th Congressional District, which stretches from just outside of Asheville to

Mooresville and up to the Virginia border, Rep. McHenry represents the heart of race country. Motorsports is both a passion and an economic driver for many of his constituents in Mooresville, which is home to race teams and motorsports parts businesses.

If you're into classic American muscle cars, odds are you are familiar with Hotchkis Sport Suspension and the parts it manufactures. Included in the company's

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product offerings are suspension handling kits for cars, trucks and SUVs, consisting of fabricated trailing arms and caster/camber plates, coil springs, anti-sway bars and strut tower braces. The company also produces suspension controls for road racing, drag racing and autocross racing teams.

For more than two decades, Hotchkis Sport Suspension was located just outside of Los Angeles in Santa Fe Springs, California. The company expanded its operations in 2013, opening Hotchkis Performance East in Mooresville with the goal

of creating even more innovative products. John Hotchkis, owner of Hotchkis Sport Suspension, relocated the rest of the company to Mooresville in 2019. Since he's a former professional racer, it is no surprise that Hotchkis feels right at home living and working in the Silicon Valley of American motorsports.

While Hotchkis spends much of his free time traveling to car shows and cruising the back roads of North Carolina in the 1986 Buick Grand National that he purchased from Bobby Allison, he is also active in volunteering at SEMA. Hotchkis is the current chairman of SEMA's Political Action Committee, which contributes to federal lawmakers who support the industry, and he is a former member of the SEMA Board of Directors.

Hotchkis Sport Suspension hosted Rep. Ted Budd (R-NC) in 2019, but a North Carolina court ruling led to a realignment of congressional districts in the state, which resulted in Mooresville being relocated to the 10th district. Hotchkis first met Rep. McHenry through a virtual meeting during SEMA's 2021 Washington Rally.

Rep. McHenry saw firsthand how the company manufactures its products during his tour of Hotchkis Performance, and he had a chance to talk with company employees and local industry leaders, including some from other member companies of SEMA and PRI in the area. The second part of the event featured Rep. McHenry addressing industry members about key issues he's working on in Washington, including the RPM Act, inflation and supply-chain challenges.

"Thanks to John Hotchkis for hosting me for a tour and a terrific discussion on my legislation designed to protect the motorsports community, the RPM Act," McHenry said. "Thank you to SEMA for organizing this discussion and advocating on behalf of the motorsports community. It was great to see so many leaders in racing showing support for their colleagues and for the sport."

As a longstanding member of the Congressional Automotive Performance and Motorsports Caucus, Rep. McHenry is acutely focused on protecting automotive enthusiasts and the businesses that make the hobby possible.

The Congressman first learned about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) efforts to prohibit motor vehi-



»» Pictured here with Hotchkis President John Hotchkis (left), Rep. McHenry saw firsthand how Hotchkis Performance manufactures its products during his tour of the company.



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cles from being converted for racing in early 2016 when a local business owner sent an email to his office. The Congressman and his staff quickly sprang into action, working with SEMA to craft a legislative solution. Within a matter of days Rep. McHenry introduced the RPM Act, which clarifies that it is legal for companies to manufacture, sell, distribute and install race parts that modify the emissions system of a car, truck or motorcycle that is being converted for race use only.

Rep. McHenry's responsiveness to his

constituents and subsequent efforts to pass the RPM Act are a testament to the impact that individuals can have on the public policy process. One email sparked the curiosity of the Congressman and his senior staff, which led to a key partnership with SEMA in the shared fight to preserve the future of racing and protect motorsports parts jobs.

"We were delighted that Rep. McHenry took the time to visit Hotchkis Sport Suspension," Hotchkis said. "His continued strong support of the RPM Act goes a long way toward passage of this act that eliminates the threat of the EPA outlawing VIN-numbered production vehicles from becoming race cars. Without the RPM Act's passage, street cars could no longer be converted for the track."

There is no better way for SEMA members to develop a relationship with their federal and state lawmakers than inviting them to tour their businesses. SEMA makes it easy for member companies to develop relationships with their lawmakers through both congressional site visits and the Washington Rally, whereby SEMA members come to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress.

For more information on planning your own Congressional District Site Visit, contact Eric Snyder in the SEMA Government Affairs office at erics@sema.org. ■