

# SEMA NEWS GOES BEHIND THE SCENES WITH U.S. REPRESENTATIVE MARKWAYNE MULLIN



■ U.S. Representative Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) and SEMA Chairman of the Board Wade Kawasaki (right) chat at the 2017 Washington Rally congressional reception.

**M**any politicians grow up dreaming of the day they will run for office. Their young adult lives are a series of tactical steps designed to build a narrative they can use as a springboard to get elected. U.S. Representative Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) took a different path, growing a family business while competing in action-packed pursuits ranging from rock crawling to mixed martial arts. It's no coincidence that he's one of the most genuine and effective members of Congress, using his platform to make government a bit friendlier to small businesses and automotive enthusiasts.

Growing up the youngest of seven children on his family's farm in Westville, Oklahoma, Mullin learned the value of hard work from a young age. He attended Missouri Valley College on a wrestling

scholarship, although he left school at the age of 20 to run his family's plumbing business when his father became ill.

At the time, Mullin Plumbing was \$500,000 in debt and employed six people.

Rep. Mullin and his wife Christie worked tirelessly over the next three years to turn the business around before he returned to college and graduated from Oklahoma State University's Institute of Technology in 2010.

Today, Mullin Plumbing is one of the largest service companies in the region, employing more than 150 workers. Rep. Mullin went on to open and operate several other businesses, including Mullin Environmental, Mullin Plumbing West Division, Mullin Services, Mullin Properties, and Mullin Plumbing New Construction.

Despite his successful career in the private sector, Mullin changed his focus to a run for Congress in 2011 due to burdensome government regulations that threatened one of his businesses. Mullin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012, and he has been driving the national debate on issues that directly impact the business community ever since.

Of note, he was the lead sponsor of a law that exempts small businesses that employ anywhere from 51–100 employees from the mandates included in the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). Previously, the exemption applied only to businesses with 50 or fewer employees.

In 2015, SEMA worked with Rep. Mullin on legislation to create a simplified regulatory system for small auto companies looking to manufacture a limited number of replica vehicles that resemble cars from at least 25 years ago. Rep. Mullin championed

the Low-Volume Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Act because he understood the unique challenges that small businesses faced in trying to comply with old and outdated requirements that were designed for corporation's mass-producing daily drivers. It also didn't hurt that Rep. Mullin had his sights set on purchasing a completed replica Cobra after the U.S. Department of Transportation implements the law. Most recently, Mullin has worked with Congressional leadership in support of passing the Recognizing the Protection of Motorsports Act.

When he's not meeting with his constituents in Oklahoma's 2nd Congressional District or advocating for their interests in our nation's capital, Rep. Mullin is either spending time with his wife and five children or engaged in one of his many hobbies. Mullin is an avid snake hunter, fitness enthusiast, and mixed martial arts fighter.

SEMA News recently had a chance to sit down with the Congressman and talk about everything from cars to political advocacy. Below are some highlights.

**SEMA News:** *What was your first car or truck?*

**Markwayne Mullin:** My first vehicle was a '82 GMC 1-ton with a 454 motor and 4WD. It was a white single cab with a blue interior, and I still have it. It's been retired for ranch use only, but it's had a good life.

**SN:** *Do any of your vehicles have aftermarket modifications?*

**MW:** Yes. My and my wife's vehicles are modified. My wife has a Ford Expedition with a suspension lift, oversize tires and modifications to power. My Ford F-250 is red with 4WD and a crew cab. It has an aftermarket exhaust system and is reprogrammed. I also have a '72 Chevy C-10, but the only thing that's original on it is probably the cab. It's just for show.

**SN:** *We understand that the first time you went to a political event was the day you announced that you were running for Congress back in 2011. What motivated you to run?*

**MW:** I was completely fed up watching elected officials with no real-world



■ SEMA Immediate Past-Chair Doug Evans (right) presents Rep. Mullin with a commemorative portrait honoring his leadership in sponsoring and enacting the Low Volume Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Act of 2015.

experience tell me how to run my company. I didn't even own a suit when I was elected to Congress.

**SN:** *When you're back in Oklahoma, what do you do for fun?*

**MW:** Coach my kids in wrestling and work cattle. Working cattle is an extremely good stress reliever and something I've always found to be cathartic. It's also great family

time and a good way for all of us to spend time together.

**SN:** *What advice do you have for automotive enthusiasts who want to make their voices heard in the public-policy arena?*

**MW:** You're never going to change anything you're willing to tolerate, so if you're fed up, get involved.

## SEMA PAC President's Club Spotlight: Ian Lehn



■ Ian Lehn.

Network and joined the SEMA PAC President's Club in 2018.

"The world around us and the industry itself are changing rapidly, as are the laws and regulations surrounding them," Lehn said. "As a SEMA member and a

Ian Lehn is the president of BOOSTane, which is based in Bonita Springs, Florida. Lehn currently serves as chair-elect of SEMA's Emerging Trends & Technology

business owner who has been directly affected by our various regulatory bodies, I felt it imperative to be proactive about fostering change and protecting the future of our automotive aftermarket industry. I believe the most effective way to do so is being at the tip of the spear, which is being a part of SEMA PAC and the President's Club."

SEMA PAC helps members keep pace by supporting the candidates and lawmakers in Washington, D.C., who understand the importance of what SEMA members do. For more information on SEMA PAC, please contact Christian Robinson by phone at 202-794-8279 or by email at christianr@sema.org. 📧