



The Industry Voice for Workplace Solutions

news release

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Office Furniture Manufacturers Review Economic, Political, and Sustainability Landscape at BIFMA Leadership Conference**

### **Turbulent Times Call For Unobstructed Vision**

**Las Vegas, NV** - Over 100 office furniture industry executives gathered at the Wynn Las Vegas Hotel on January 29 and 30 to hear what leading thinkers believe faces them in the coming year.

Dr. Allen Sinai opened the conference with an analysis of the current economic crisis and his prediction that the recession will last most of 2009, followed by an upturn near the end of the year. Dr. Sinai is Chief Global Economist, Strategist, and President, of Decision Economics, Inc. He is known for his objective, fact-based analyses, and forecasts on “big wave” economic, political, and societal trends that move markets and business. Dr. Sinai's thoughtful dissection of the complex problems plaguing all financial institutions provided plenty of conversation starters as conference attendees mingled between sessions.

On the political front, Larry Sabato, founder and director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, provided a review of the 2008 Presidential election. His candid observations on the political parties and demographics of the electorate were simultaneously humorous and insightful, explaining quite clearly how voters perceived the candidates last year and the growing power of the informed voter.

The topic of sustainability was also front and center on the program this year. Ray Anderson of Interface, Inc. shared his experience as a pioneer of sustainability in the business world. Ten years ago, Mr. Anderson was a speaker at a BIFMA annual conference and in the decade since he shared his vision with the association, industry leaders have stepped forward to join his cause.

BIFMA has its own furniture sustainability standard and member companies are active in all areas to improve the quality of life not only within the office but beyond the workplace to homes, schools, and health care facilities. The theme of this year's BIFMA conference was "Managing In Turbulent Times" and Mr. Anderson shared his secrets for remaining a sustainable business, even in economic downturns. As Ray said, "it's my story, and I'm sticking to it!"

Other speakers on sustainability and environmental issues of interest included Jeffrey Foote of The Coca-Cola Company who shared learnings from his company's environmental partnerships around the world that have allowed the beverage company to strengthen its supply chain relationships; Beth Beloff, one of the top thought leaders in the advancement and expansion of

Sustainable Development concepts and practices, who worked with/for Charles Eames when she was just out of graduate architecture school and addressed Corporate Social Responsibility; and Jim Aguila of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in a breakout session covering that state's formaldehyde rule for particleboard.

The BIFMA e3 Furniture Sustainability Standard was the focus of three sessions. Tom Reardon of BIFMA and Martin Flaherty of Viridity, Inc. premiered a certification and labeling program for the standard while Bill Stough of the Sustainable Research Group conducted two workshops on technical aspects of the standard.

For the second year, Mark Strauss, Publisher and Vice President of Interior Design Magazine revealed new research at the BIFMA conference. This year, the focus was the corporate real estate market and, specifically, how today's real estate and end user communities make furniture buying decisions.

BIFMA also recognizes and thanks sponsors of various aspects of the conference.

- Interior Design Magazine
- Byrne Electrical Specialists
- Light Corporation
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**About BIFMA** The Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association (BIFMA) International's mission is to lead, advocate, inform and develop standards for the North American office and institutional furniture industry. BIFMA is a not-for-profit organization that provides an effective forum for Members to cooperate and collaborate on appropriate industry issues. We develop voluntary product and industry standards that support safe, healthy and sustainable environments; publish key industry statistics; advocate for legislation and government regulation that have a direct impact on the health of the industry; and facilitate meaningful dialog and education to support our core services and the industry we serve.

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