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NLA AND WRLA SIGN MERGER AGREEMENT

WISCONSIN DELLS, WI – In the Upper Midwest two organizations have represented the lumber and building materials dealers for more than 100 years. Wisconsin Retail Lumber Association Inc. (WRLA) and Northwestern Lumber Association (NLA) have had a strong sense of identity and purpose in representing their industry in government affairs and providing needed benefits to its members. In the tradition of continuing that purpose, the two organizations made a historic step in signing the merger papers on February 10 at the WRLA Annual Convention.

This vision had begun with dealers from each association and their executive directors discussing the future of associations back in 2004. Though neither association is broken, the wisdom of that discussion was evident as informal talks ensued until the time was right for formal negotiations to begin. After three years of discussions, the two association boards came to an agreement.

NLA Chairman John Bates said, “In these changing times, organizations need to plan for their future and not just react to what hits them.” The changes in the membership demographics was definitely one of the issues that drove this negotiation. Bringing the WRLA dealers into the NLA umbrella to manage their services and programs just made sense according to Paula Siewert, president of NLA.

The Wisconsin dealers are not losing their identity as NLA will continue to do business as Wisconsin Retail Lumber Association. They will retain their convention and continue their work on state legislative issues as well as have national representation. WRLA Executive Vice President David Rosenmeier explained, “The WRLA members will not notice any disruption in their services or activities. A board will continue to oversee the convention, special events and legislative work.”

“I am very excited with the opportunity to make both organizations better. ... there are more programs and benefits available to us,” said WRLA President Bill Wood after the signing ceremony. “We will have our own identity and we will be proud of the things we will accomplish.”

A new education foundation has also been established, Wisconsin Lumber Dealers Education Foundation, as a result of this merger with the reserve funds raised over the years by WRLA. A board will manage the funds and issue even more scholarships than they have in the past. Their purpose is to prepare students for this industry and support the employees who are currently working in member firms.

Transitional work will begin this summer and the merger will be completed January 1, 2011.