

TOP CONGRESSMAN VISITS GARAGE DOOR DEALER

Installs Garage Door Opener in NFIB Media Event

(Photo at top) Ray Ice (left) discusses the frustrations of small business. In business since 1986, Kern Door has 15 employees and sells and installs residential and commercial garage doors and openers as well as dock equipment.

On Aug. 9, the garage door industry gained some exposure in the halls of government. On that day, the majority whip of the U.S. House of Representatives worked with a door dealer to install a garage door opener at a California home.

The installation was part of a 2-1/2-hour event that included a meeting for small businesses held at Kern Door in Bakersfield. Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield), first elected in 2006, has been majority whip since 2010.

The majority whip could be considered the number three Republican in the House, behind Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.). The whip position has been held by such Republican notables as Dick Cheney and Newt Gingrich and such leading Democrats as Carl Albert, Tip O'Neill, and Nancy Pelosi.

The Aug. 9 event, organized by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), is part of a nationwide campaign, launched in August, to get 12 members of Congress to walk in the shoes of a small-business owner for a day. In that month, similar events were held at different small businesses in Kansas, Michigan, and Tennessee.

Gary Brown, a local NFIB representative, had proposed the idea to Ray Ice, Kern Door president, about a week earlier. Ice, a member of NFIB, had never met McCarthy before the event.

Pre-Meeting Preparations

Before the congressman's visit, "Security people came and checked our place out," said Ice. "They also visited the installation site."

The tightly scheduled event began at 9:00 a.m., when Rep. McCarthy met with Ice, his business partner, Steve Chapman, and their families.

"He acted like he was one of us, and he is," recalled Ice.

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Before going to Washington, McCarthy was a small-business owner in Bakersfield. His website says, “He is committed to policies that give small businesses and entrepreneurs the confidence they need to hire, expand, invest, and innovate.”

Fielding Hot Topics

At 9:15 a.m., a roundtable discussion was held in the Kern Door warehouse with about 25 local small-business owners. Ice had invited one of his garage door competitors, but he was unable to attend.

McCarthy fielded about nine questions—on topics that ranged from Obamacare to simplifying the tax code, frivolous lawsuits, background checks on prospective employees, and immigration, a hot topic in California’s Central Valley.

We asked McCarthy what he felt were the top legislative issues facing small businesses. He replied, “We must eliminate the onerous and excessive regulations on small businesses and reform the tax code to allow small business owners to grow, expand, and hire.”

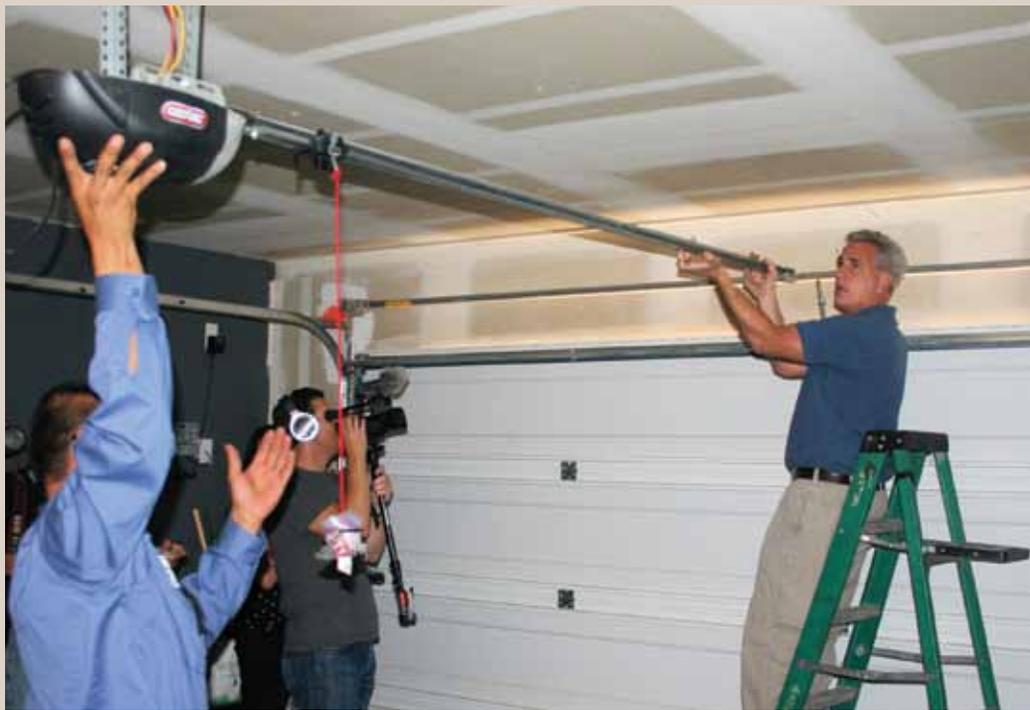
The Media

Attending the meeting were several local news reporters. The local newspaper, the (Bakersfield) Californian, sent a reporter and a photographer; two television stations sent crews; and the NFIB sent its own reporter.

At 10:00 a.m., after the 45-minute discussion, the congressman held a press conference with the media for 15 minutes. Afterward, all the reporters drove to the job site for the installation.

A Minor Hiccup

At 10:15 a.m., McCarthy hopped in Ray Ice’s car and rode to the job site with Ice and his



With the media covering every move, Rep. McCarthy sets the opener rail in place.

wife. A minor hiccup occurred upon their arrival at the customer’s home at 10:30.

“We beat the installer to the site,” said Ice. “But he got there about five minutes later.” That’s when Vidal Rodriguez, a professional installer from Kern Door, took charge and led McCarthy through the installation.

Action in the Garage

The homeowner’s opener had burned out one morning when she forgot to unlock the garage door latch before hitting the opener button. Since she was selling the house, having to buy a new opener was an unwelcome surprise.

Ice called her three days before the installation. “At first, she didn’t even know who McCarthy was,” recalled Ice. But by the

day of the installation, she was caught up in the excitement of the event.

The action inside the garage seemed to capture the media’s attention more than the roundtable discussion. “Congressman trades power suit for power drill,” was the headline of the local newspaper’s coverage, which carried three photos of McCarthy working in the garage.

A Future Installer?

“He did it well!” remarked Ice. “He really caught on quick. I told him I would offer him a job because he did so well.”

McCarthy told Door & Access Systems that he had never installed an opener before, “but I had a great teacher in Ray’s employee, Vidal,” he said.

The whole installation took about an hour, and the congressman’s visit wrapped up at 11:30 a.m. As reported by the local newspaper, McCarthy scratched a message on the garage wall: “Garage door by Kevin McCarthy.”

“We’re Just Blessed”

When you consider that there are 435 representatives in the U.S. House and that only 12 small businesses will host these NFIB events, it’s remarkable that one of those businesses was a garage door company and that the representative was the #3 Republican in the House.

As Ray Ice said, “We’re just blessed that he came here.” ■



McCarthy and Kern Door installer Vidal Rodriguez review their successful installation.

Photos courtesy of Ray Ice