

VESTKUSTEN

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Please call for a consultation:

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Naturalization, employment-based, and family-based immigration legal matters in Santa Clara, San Francisco, Marin, Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Mateo counties.

Ms. Bonilla has been practicing Immigration Law since 1987 and is an active member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. Ms. Bonilla is directly involved with each case at every step of the way. She, rather than a paralegal or secretary, makes all decisions, prepares the cases, and answers all clients questions. She is a member of the Washington State Bar and is authorized by Federal Law to represent persons before the US CIS.

Game on Nordic!!

The world's largest professional-only game event, the Game Developers Conference (GDC), took place in San Francisco the 18th through 22nd of February. It is an annual event held in San Francisco, in the Moscone Convention Center downtown. The GDC is an essential forum for learning, inspiration, and networking for the creators of computer, console, hand held, mobile, and online games.



Above: Olof Hult from esi Techtrans and Kim Murphy Event Manager Great American Music Hall. Left: Per Stromback, Spokesperson for the Swedish Games Industry



20 years ago the event was an informal gathering of about 25 developers. The event today attracts over 16,000 attendees from all over the globe. Programmers, artists, and game designers all gather to exchange ideas to shape the future of the industry. The conference this year featured over 400 lectures, panels, and discussions on a comprehensive selection of game development topics. The two last days of the week also offered the GDP expo showcase where all the most relevant game development tools, platforms, and services were exposed.

Sweden enjoys a strong reputation within the industry. Many of the Swedish companies are small and do not stand out among the many giants taking up large floor spaces to show their offerings. Therefore the Nordic companies attending the conference team up under the auspices of Exportrådet (Swedish Trade Council) to create a Nordic Game pavilion.

We got a word with spokesperson Per Strömbäck, of the Swedish special interest organization for gaming, Dataspelsbranschen. Per had a busy week attending discussions and seminars with other countries' special interest organizations, helping out the companies in the Nordic pavilion, and creating new contacts. Per tells us that it is important for smaller companies in a global industry to attend a conference like this, especially since the "Nordic companies have a very good quality in their products."

Per recognizes that the Nordic region is among the top five leading regions within the gaming industry. This is among other things shown by the fact that Sweden has had three huge blockbuster games (Battlefield, The Darkness, World in Conflict) on the American market just during the last year, and received several awards around the world. Furthermore, Per tells us that the main objective of the conference is to be a gathering point for the

people working within the gaming industry, and thereby giving the opportunities to create contacts with future business partners.

While the large vendors host elaborate receptions and parties in the evenings to lure prospects and customers, Spelplan, the Swedish Association of Game Developers, and the Nordic Game pavilion each year host a large Nordic Lounge party which offers the participating companies a venue to invite their friends and prospects to. This year's event, named Nördic Metal Lounge, headlined by the 1980's American hard rock band Skid Row, was a loud and boisterous success with more than 500 attendees. Like the previous three years, the event was managed by Los Angeles based ESI Techtrans, a business development and incubating firm catering to Scandinavians and members of the SACC Los Angeles. Olof Hult, a principal of ESI, points out that while a rock and roll party may seem frivolous or non-serious, in fact from a marketing and business development point of view, it is not just fun, but a well targeted marketing tool, strategically matched in purpose with its targeted audience. Besides, says Olof, "it really is a fun diversion from the often more 'adult' activities ESI carries out."

In Sweden during 2007 there were more games sold than ever before. Around 7.6 million games to a value of over 350 million US dollars were sold. Gaming is the fastest growing area within the entertainment industry. And we are sure that it will grow and develop even more, and that next year we will experience even more Nordic success companies at the conference.

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Sweden as role model...

Continued from page 1

"To understand the connection between renewable energy and jobs, just look at Sweden — a country with striking resemblances to our state: the same size population, similar geography with two-thirds of their land covered by forests, a strong automotive sector," Granholm said. "Sweden set high goals for their use of renewable energy. The result? They created over 2,000 businesses and 400,000 jobs in their renewable energy sector -- 400,000 jobs."

The United States has about 121 million drivers and just more than 1,200 E85 pumps, mostly in the midwest. By contrast, Sweden has 5 million drivers but more than 1,000 ethanol pumps, in part because of a 2006 Swedish law requiring stations to have an alternative fuel pump.

At the Detroit auto show in January, GM announced it invested in Warrenville, Illinois' cellulosic research firm Coskata Inc. In December, 80 percent of the vehicles sold by GM's Saab unit were flex-fuel capable, said Christer Nilsson, a Saab spokesman. "The approach has been to coordinate all actors to start the journey at the same time, marching together," Nilsson said. "The cars are of no need if there are no pumps and vice versa."

About 12 percent of vehicles sold in Sweden in 2007 were E85 models, versus an expected 6 percent in the United States.

Sweden has also taken financial steps to encourage E85 vehicles that the United States hasn't. Those vehicles qualify for a 20 percent tax break and many local governments give flex-fuel vehicles free parking.

Last March, the Swedish government also gave flex-fuel vehicle buyers a \$1,500 rebate and there is no tax on E85 at the pump. Granholm has called for the elimination of Michigan's \$0.12 per gallon tax on E85.

Some automakers in Sweden have pitched in, too. Volvo gives customers a rebate when they trade in a gasoline-vehicle for a flex-fuel one in Sweden.

Further evidence of the commitment is the pressure by some political parties in Sweden to ban the sale of non-environmentally friendly cars after 2015.

The rest of Europe is starting to embrace etha-

nol, though outside of Sweden there are only 375 E85 pumps. Scottish whisky distilleries want to make ethanol out of waste material. Last year Great Britain opened its first ethanol plant from sugar beets, while France wants 7 percent of all its fuel to come from ethanol by 2010.

The United States has taken a different approach to getting ethanol to the pumps. The energy bill boosting fuel economy standards that became law in December requires the nation to use 36 billion gallons of ethanol by 2022, including 21 billion gallons of cellulosic ethanol, but it doesn't regulate how to get there.

Americans spend \$1 billion a day to consume about 388 million gallons of gasoline. In 2006, Americans used 5.4 billion gallons of ethanol. Under the new law, the U.S. must use 9 billion gallons of ethanol in 2008.

The quick ramp up of ethanol use has drawn concerns from one of the energy bill's main authors, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-New Mexico, chairman of the Senate energy and natural resources committee. "Early year biofuel requirements could be too aggressive," he said. Since the vast majority of ethanol in the United States comes from corn, diverting more corn to ethanol has led to its price more than doubling.

"If we cannot produce enough ethanol and biodiesel to meet these aggressive mandates, while maintaining food and fuel prices that consumers can afford, the biofuel industry will be tarnished," Bingaman said. "The cost of failure is high."

Bruce Dale, a professor of chemical engineering at Michigan State University and an expert on ethanol, said Congress was right to set tough goals and the United States can learn from Sweden.

"Otherwise, we're going to muddle along for a long time," Dale said. "How much longer do we want to be dependent on \$100-a-barrel oil that's crippling us?"



Recent program on alternative energy in Washington D.C.

House of Sweden recently held a series of sessions and workshops on Research and Innovation in Energy in conjunction with the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC). Under the auspices of the Innovation & Technology program, Sweden's embassy in Washington, D.C., in cooperation with the Office of Science and Technology, brought together an

impressive group of speakers and attendee. Pictured above are L-R: Mr. Alexander Karsner, Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable energy; Ms. Maud Olofsson, Sweden's Minister for Enterprise and Energy, Deputy Prime Minister; H.E. Michael M. Wood, United States Ambassador to Sweden; H.E. Jonas Hafström, Sweden's Ambassador to the U.S.

Memorable facts from the introductory seminars:

- Climate change is a fact and the biggest challenge of our time
- It is a global problem where all nations will have to participate in the solutions
- The implications of the President's plan to dramatically reduce U.S. gasoline consumption by 20% in ten years—a prospect which in essence creates an entirely new market worth billions of dollars. More or less so far overlooked by media.
- A consensus among speakers that although many bilateral agreements are symbols of friendship and not necessary yielding results, the agreement of June, 2007 between Sweden and the USA on alternative energy cooperation is already producing many practical results.
- One of the most commendable being the US Embassy in Stockholm program called 'One Big Thing,' which brings together cleantech companies in Sweden and venture capital in America.

- More info, <http://stockholm.usembassy.gov>
- There's a lack of ideas, not of capital. Meanwhile Assistant Secretary Karsner in conjunction with the build up of ethanol distribution in Sweden, claims that, "some things are going terribly right in Sweden."
- Although ethanol production and solutions have become criticized in recent times for obstructing food prices and upsetting food production, "the use of ethanol is better in any case and from any source than gasoline." (Karsner, DOE). More info, www.eere.energy.gov
- It is furthermore expected that the next generation ethanol, based on cellulosic ethanol from the pulp and paper industry, will be cost-effective by 2012.
- A consensus that new technologies will solve the problems of our impact on climate change. More info on programs at House of Sweden, see www.houseofsweden.com

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