



At The Pump and Down The Aisle

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OMEGAWV.com Up and Running

We are very excited to have our new web site up and running. We have been working with Jamie Summers of Bricks Without Straw to develop a web site that we think will be helpful to our members and make non-members want to join!

Members will be able to:

- Get past issues of *At the Pump and Down the Aisle*.
- Get compliance bulletins.
- Get legislative information.
- Get information on any upcoming meetings and be able to print registration forms for these events.
- Link to industry web sites such as PMAA, NACS, FMI, just to name a few.

All newsletters, compliance bulletins and legislative information will be in a Members Only Section very soon. We will be notifying you with the password.

Non-Members will be able to:

- Get information about OMEGA and its members (this is useful for the Press).
- Get dues structures and print membership applications.
- Get information on upcoming meetings and print registration forms.

If you have suggestions on how to make this web site more useful, please contact Traci Nelson in the Association office.

Membership Drive

Michael Graney, Vice President of OMEGA, has launched a membership drive for the Association. Serving on his committee are: Sandra Warner of Par Mar Oil Company, Marshall Bishop of Bruceton Petroleum, Thad Ours of Petersburg Oil Company, Ron Bowers of Prima Marketing, Bob Eastman of Ohio Valley Supermarkets and Danny Byrd of Hooten Equipment Company.

The committee met via conference call in January and came up with a plan of action to strengthen OMEGA. Some of the steps we are taking are:

- **Trial memberships.** Lobbying is one of our most valuable membership services, so we will offer trial memberships during the legislative session to any grocer, convenience store owner/operator or petroleum jobber. We feel that this is the best time of year to "show-off" what we can do!

(Continued on Page 23)



**Join The
Marathon Team!**

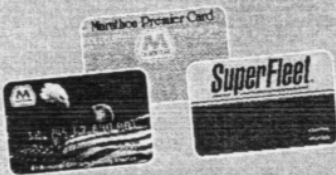


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West Virginia News



State Takes Major Step Towards Job Creation; Governor Says "This Is Just the Beginning!"

Surrounded by legislative leaders and representatives from the state's business and labor communities, Gov. Joe Manchin recently called the just completed special legislative session nothing short of "historic."

"What occurred under this dome during the past six days was truly unprecedented. We accomplished in one week what some said could never be achieved in a lifetime. It is proof that the old-time politics of the past are no more in West Virginia," the governor said. "I am so proud of the Democratic members of our legislature and their responsible Republican colleagues who showed real courage in taking the major steps necessary to put our people back to work. The state's business and labor leaders really stepped up to the plate and put their individual interests aside to do what is best for the future of our state. It just goes to show that when we work together we really can accomplish great things."

The special session, called by the governor to address the financial issues that were substantially hindering the state's economic growth and stability, ended on February 29th with final passage of landmark legislation tackling four major issues critical to the state's future: reorganizing the executive branch of government to be more accountable for its actions and more coordinated in its efforts; managing the state's long-term debt by approving a fixed mortgage to pay off our unfunded pension liabilities; restoring confidence in state government by strengthening our state's ethics laws and holding those who represent the state to the highest possible code of conduct; and, last but certainly not least, spurring job creation and economic development in West Virginia by creating a permanent fix to our long-standing Workers' Compensation problem.

According to Governor Manchin, "We've just taken one giant leap forward as a state and as a people. The days of the short-term, band-aid fixes are over. This should demonstrate not only to the businesses of West Virginia but to the businesses of the nation that our state and its leaders are committed to doing everything within our power to save the good jobs we currently have and find ways to create many, many more. This is simply the beginning. Today we lit a spark on behalf of our children and grandchildren. The full fire is still to come."

Highlights of the Issues That Passed

During the Special Session

Reorganization and Restructuring of Government

The following agencies are established or reestablished as independent agencies within the executive branch:

- School Building Authority
- Water Development Authority
- Infrastructure Council
- Public Energy Authority
- Educational Broadcast Authority
- Job Investment Trust
- Infrastructure & Jobs Development Council
- Housing Development Fund

The Governor (or his designee) will now serve on these boards as chairperson. Additionally, the legislation provides that the Governor will now appoint the executive directors of these agencies or authorities.

The legislation reestablished the Bureau of Commerce as the Department of Commerce with the following agencies:

- Division of Labor
- West Virginia Development Office
- Division of Forestry
- Division of Natural Resources
- Mine Health and Safety Administration
- Geological & Economic Survey
- Public Land Corporation
- Tourism

The legislation restructured the Council for Community and Economic Development,

Continued on page 4...

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permitting the Governor (rather than the council) to appoint the executive director of the West Virginia Development Office and shifting the approval authority for the programs from the Council to the executive director of the WVDO. This shift in approval authority required numerous changes to other statutes providing for Council approval.

Amendment for Pension Obligation Bonds

This is part of the Governor's plan to manage the state's long-term debt by "refinancing" our unfunded pension liability and fixing our annual "mortgage" payments.

As of June 30, 2003...

- Judges Retirement System \$44 million
- State Troopers Plan A \$350 million
- Teachers Retirement System \$5.05 billion

To address those massive unfunded liabilities, the state is now required to make supplemental appropriations that are recalculated annually to amortize the UAAL over a specific term.

In 2000, 2002, and 2003, the legislature passed the Pension Liability Redemption Act, which would have permitted the state to issue bonds to fund these "unfunded liabilities." The State Supreme Court of Appeals recently concluded in *Perdue v. Wise*, the sale of these bonds to fund pension systems MUST be submitted to voters as a constitutional amendment. Consistent with that decision, and with the spirit and intent of the Pension Liability Redemption Act, the joint resolution proposes an amendment to the Constitution permitting the State of West Virginia to issue bonds to fund the unfunded actuarial accrued liabilities of these three critical state pension systems.

Workers' Compensation

Phase I - Preparation for Mutual Co. (Upon Passage through Dec. 31, 2005)

- Employees remain in Civil Service and state benefits programs until Dec. 31, 2005
- \$35 million fund established for transition
- To be funded as of January 1, 2006:
 - Old Fund
 - New Fund
 - Self-Insurance Guaranty Pool Fund
 - Self-Insurance Security Pool Fund
 - Uninsured Fund
 - Private Carrier Guaranty Fund
- Reassignment of regulatory and adjudicatory functions to Insurance Commission, effective Jan. 1, 2006
- Current Board of Managers stays in place until 12/31/05
- Creation of 3-member Provisional Board for Mutual effective on date of passage
- Provisional board would develop process to transform WCC to Mutual by 12/31/05

Phase II - Establish Mutual Company (Jan. 1, 2006 - to June 30, 2008)

- WCC becomes a private, not-for-profit mutual company; former state employees become employees of the Mutual
- New Fund transfers to Mutual; Old Fund admin by Mutual
- Permanent, 7-member Board of Directors elected by rules established by the Provisional Board
- Process would be completed by Nov. 1, 2005 so board could begin work on Janu.1, 2006
- WCC Executive Director serves as CEO of Mutual for at least first year of operation
- Mutual Co. is sole provider of coverage in WV
- Mutual Co. has 2.5 years to solidify existing customer base.

- Mutual writes coverage for all state agencies, boards, and commissions, and higher ed thru 2012; then state can bid out
- Rate reduction for employers on Jan. 1, 2006 (10-15%net) FY07 - actuarially determined; approved by IC
FY08 - actuarially determined; approved by IC
FY09 - No more than 5% variance from base rate
FY10 - No more than 10% variance from base rate
FY11 and beyond - Insurance Commissioner sets base rates and insurance carriers submit rates for approval

Phase III - Competitive Market (July 1, 2008 and thereafter)

- Open market for all licensed private insurance carriers
- Insurance Commissioner and Industrial Council will regulate and monitor
- Adverse risk pool developed for companies that cannot buy coverage
- Workers' compensation rates have been stabilized after removal of the deficit share from the calculations
- Injured workers' benefit levels remain in code and under exclusive state control
- Claims decision review (OOJ, Board of Review, Supreme Court) remain in code and under exclusive state control
- OP Board remains under exclusive state control to retain system expertise

Unfunded Liability Funding

Severance Taxes - \$90.2 million

- Coal: \$.56 ton
- Natural Gas: \$.047 per MDF
- Timber: 2.7% Special Severance Tax

Policy Surcharge - \$45 million

Tobacco Settlement - \$30 million

Excess Lottery - \$45 million *

Purse Fund Reduction - \$10 million**

Total - \$230.2 million

***This is infrastructure money. It will be supplemented with General Revenue dollars.**

**** This was reduced from the original \$20 million. They picked up some money from the self-insureds.**

West Virginia Governmental Ethics Act

Building upon the reforms suggested by the Ethics Commission, this bill seeks to restore confidence in government by substantially strengthening the West Virginia Governmental Ethics Act.

Among the reforms contained in the bill:

- A new procedure permitting the commission to evaluate credible information of a possible violation in the absence of a field complaint
- The standard of proof has been reduced from the criminal standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" to "clear and convincing evidence"
- Penalties for violation have been increased, including increased fines, reimbursement to the Commission for costs, etc.
- The statute of limitations has been increased from one year to three years
- In the event that a criminal violation is involved, the commission now has a mandatory obligation to refer the matter to the appropriate county prosecutor

- Penalties have been added to deter the filing of fraudulent/malicious complaints
- Mandatory ethics training for certain public officials (including legislators)

Additionally, new provisions have been added to the ethical standards in 6B-2-5 including:

- A prohibition on receiving compensation from more than one public employment position for performing related duties during coincident hours of the workday (subject to various exceptions/exemptions so as not to be overbroad)
- A requirement that any non-profit receiving State funds shall file a financial disclosure with the Commission setting forth the compensation of all directors, officers and employees.

The financial disclosure provision, 6B-2-7, has been expanded to require more information.

Similarly, the following changes have been made to the provisions regulating lobbyists:

- An increase in registration fee to \$100, plus an additional \$100 for each employer represented
- A requirement of reporting three times per year
- Full and complete disclosure of every expenditure made/incurred on behalf of lobbyist and the identity of the official/employee for whom the expenditure was made

Renovating the Governor's Mansion

This legislation allows the excess monies from the inaugural funds to be designated to go toward improvements and maintenance of the Governor's Mansion.

WV Lottery Highlights

Through December 31, 2004, overall fiscal sales totaled \$684,932,947. This was up 9 percent from fiscal year 2004, an increase of \$57 million.

December's overall sales were \$106,871,906, a decrease of 2 percent from November's sales. The weekly per capita was \$13.65, down 26 cents from the previous month's \$13.91.

Compared to December 2003, total sales showed a 9 percent increase. This month's per capita was up \$1.10 from last December's \$12.55 per capita.

Traditional Lottery

Through December 31, 2004, fiscal sales for traditional lottery (instants and online) totaled \$99,306,846. This amount was down 6 percent from fiscal year 2004, a decrease of \$6 million, due in part to fewer large Powerball jackpots this year and holidays falling on Friday and Saturday, the two busiest days for Keno and Powerball sales.

Traditional lottery sales for December 2004 of \$17,508,756 were up 14 percent from November 2004, and the per capita was \$2.24, up 28 cents. Compared to December 2003, sales were down 23 percent. The per capita was down 67 cents from December 2003's weekly per capita of \$2.91.

Video Lottery

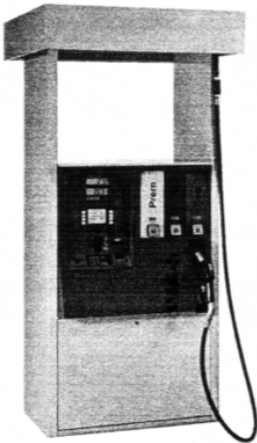
December 2004 racetrack video lottery gross terminal revenues were down 8 percent from the previous month and up 14 percent from December 2003.

Limited video lottery gross terminal revenues increased by 5 percent from the previous month and were up 32 percent over December 2003.

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Legislative Session

The Legislative Session will begin on February 9th.

OMEGA Legislative Issues

Commercial Issues

The affordability and availability

This includes moving forth legislation that encompasses joint & several liability limits, collateral sources and third party bad faith.

Gas Tax Stability

OMEGA is not in favor of increasing our gasoline and diesel taxes. Much has been discussed recently regarding highway funding and the need for additional revenues. Our position is that we need to analyze where the dollars are now going and how we can be more efficient. Our gas tax is higher than all of our surrounding states with the exception of Pennsylvania.

Fair Competition

OMEGA is comprised of hometown employers and entrepreneurs contributing to our communities. We believe that advantages should not be given to large out-of-state companies or that our surrounding states should have advantages over us. We ask for an even playing field to conduct business.

Governmental Regulatory Authority Cooperation

Our members interact with various agencies on a daily basis. We wish for fair and consistent treatment and an environment that is business friendly for those of us that are in the service industry providing a service to our fellow West Virginians and who are employing West Virginians.

Bottle Bill

We are against this legislation. Facts: Forced deposits do little to help the environment, forced deposits impose a hidden, regressive tax on consumers, forced deposits are costly to operate and administer and impose a significant health and safety risk, comprehensive recycling programs are better investments, and comprehensive litter control outperforms forced deposits.

OMEGA endorses and will work hard on the BIC issues, which are:

- **Civil Justice Reform**
- **Insurance Reform**
- **Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund**
- **Health Care Issues**

Following is a recent OMEGA Press Release...

Gas Tax Increase Takes Effect

New Gas Sticker to Be Placed On Fuel Pumps Around State

Charleston, WV (January 19, 2005) - West Virginia's variable gas tax jumped by nearly 2 cents at the start of 2005, increasing the total state and federal tax on a gallon of gasoline to 45.40 cents, officials with the West Virginia Oil Marketers & Grocers Association (OMEGA) announced recently.

Jan Vineyard, executive director of OMEGA which is the trade association representing fuel wholesalers and retailers in West Virginia, said, "This increase in the state portion of the gas tax will affect everyone's wallet and may force those living in West Virginia's border communities to shop for fuel across state lines."

According to Vineyard, West Virginia had the seventh highest gas tax in the country.

With the new tax hike, state residents will pay 27 cents per

gallon in state tax - up from 25.35 cents in 2004. In surrounding states, Pennsylvania and Ohio residents pay 30 cents and 26 cents, respectively. Maryland charges 23.5 cents, Virginia 17.5 cents and Kentucky ranks lowest at 16.4 cents.

Vineyard said the increase is due to a 1983 change in the tax code that allowed for a variable increase in the gas tax. At the time, high oil prices were impacting consumer fuel sales, and less revenue was coming in for state road construction.

"Our West Virginia station owners don't like this anymore than the consumer. Increasing the tax at a time when gas prices are at their highest levels makes our West Virginia fuel sellers less competitive and adds another burden on the consumer," Vineyard said. "We understand the state's need for more dollars for road construction and maintenance, but the timing for this is terrible."

Fuel retailers throughout the state will post a new informational sticker on all gas pumps in the coming weeks alerting consumers of the new tax.

For additional information on the gas tax, contact Jan Vineyard at (304) 343-5500.

You Are Paying

MORE THAN 45¢ TAX

**On Each Gallon of
GASOLINE**

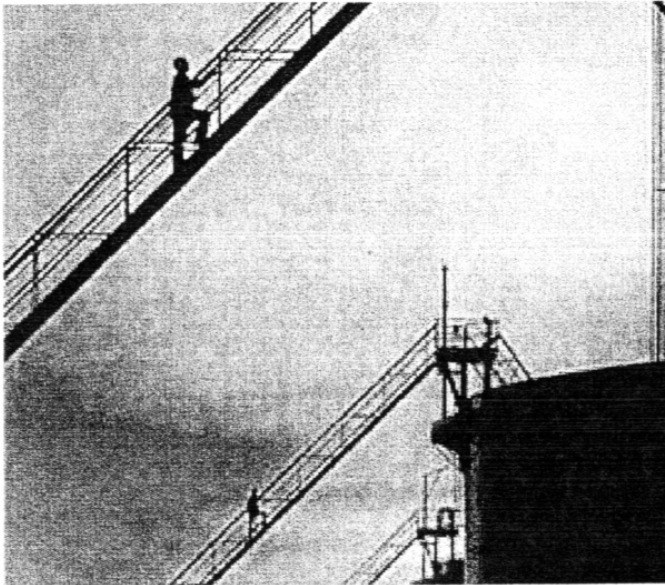
WV Tax	27.00¢
Federal Tax	<u>18.40¢</u>
Total	45.40¢

A similar sticker is available for diesel. The total for diesel is 51.40 cents per gallon.

City Insurance

PROFESSIONALS

FUEL MARKETERS PROGRAM



Coverages

- > Property
- > Automobile
- > Broadened Pollution Liability
- > General Liability
- > Inland Marine
- > Crime
- > Accounts Receivable
- > Gasoline or Oil Contamination
- > Erroneous Delivery of Liquid Products
- > Spoilage Coverage
- > These are the key coverages available more coverages are offered through AMC's program.

1 Petroleum Jobbers

A Petroleum Jobber is a wholesale distributor of petroleum-based products. Petroleum Jobbers purchase these products directly from the refining companies (or in some cases from larger jobbers) and either sell them to retailers, or sell them directly to the users of those products. In conjunction with this program AMC will be able to write the C-stores and Card Locks.

2 Home Heating Oil Distribution

The intent is to include these operators in their capacity as wholesalers, retailers, or service work. To qualify for coverage a risk must have at least 50% of total sales generated from one or a combination of these forementioned categories or in combination with one or more of the eligible classes.

(304) 926-7400

fax: (304) 926-7428

3 Propane Retail & Wholesale

Retailers distribute the gas in tank trucks or pre-filled cylinders to homes, farms, commercial establishments or factories.

In addition to distributing LP gas, retailers also may install storage tanks, which usually are provided to the customer as part of the service, and sell or lease and install LP gas appliances and burner assemblies.

4 Used Oil Haulers

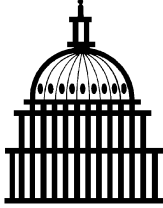
Used oil dealers perform functions ranging from transportation intermediaries to remediation of waste oil products.

The common thread between the intermediary (smaller companies) and a recycler is both collect and transport used oil products, lubricants and other miscellaneous products such as antifreeze.

5 Common & Contract Carriers

The intent is to insure operators that haul petroleum products for hire or under contract; this can be the only operation or in conjunction with other operations.

Federal Highlights



Estate Tax Reform

Included in the Senate Republican agenda for this year is a measure sponsored by Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ) to either repeal or reform the estate tax. Kyl sponsored a measure in the last Congress to make estate tax repeal permanent and accelerate full repeal in 2005. The estate tax is currently scheduled for a one-year appeal in 2010 before resuming in 2011. Responsible Wealth, a group made up of wealthy Americans advocating for fair taxes said that the votes among those who support and oppose estate tax repeal are very close in the Senate, but there are two issues (lost revenue and tax cuts during a war) are giving lawmakers pause about its repeal. #

Tax Corrections Bill

Plans are in the works to introduce a tax technical corrections bill that is much broader than the one introduced in November. Senate Finance Committee Republican tax counsel Edward McClellan said he cannot predict a time frame for the introduction. He said the technical corrections bill will be a major priority and that the Finance Committee is well aware of the urgent and sensitive issues surrounding a one-year tax break for foreign dividends brought

back to the United States under the recently enacted American Jobs Creation Act. Taxpayers are

watching the bill with intense interest because it contains significant clarifications under the repatriations provision, especially language dealing with a gross-up of certain income under Internal Revenue Code Section 78, among other issues. Several companies have informed the Finance Committee that if the language now in the Jobs Act is not fixed, they will not be able to repatriate their foreign earnings. In addition to the corrections measure, a crowded tax agenda in the coming Congress is likely to include legislation to reauthorize federal highway funding, extend 34 expiring tax relief provisions and make pension changes.

Youth Employment Rules Published by Labor Department

New rules focusing on young workers were published Dec. 16 by the Department of Labor that are, according to U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao, "part of the department's ongoing effort to promote positive and safe work experiences for young workers." The rules become effective next month and expand protections for youths working in restaurants and in roofing operations, and also focus on driving requirements and the operation of compactors and bailers. Chao said the new rules follow on the department's successful *YouthRules!* public awareness campaign launched in May 2002.

NEWS from OSHA

Injury and Illness Posting Requirements Effective This Month

Employers are reminded that beginning today, a summary of workplace injuries and illnesses that occurred last year must be posted for three months. The summary (OSHA Form 300A) must list the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred in 2004 and were logged on the OSHA 300 form (Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses). Employers must display the form in a common area wherever notices to workers are normally posted. The annual requirement is part of OSHA's recordkeeping regulations.

OSHA Recordkeeping Handbook Available Online

OSHA has a new publication on its web site to aid employers and workers in understanding the agency's recordkeeping policies, procedures and requirements. The OSHA Recordkeeping Handbook combines information from the agency's recordkeeping rule, the recordkeeping policies and procedures manual, as well as tools and guidance materials from throughout the agency's web site. The handbook allows the user to easily locate specific information pertaining to each section of the rule, and also contains recordkeeping-related Frequently Asked Questions and OSHA's enforcement guidance that has previously been presented in various agency Letters of Interpretation.

Kerosene Regulations

Dennis Harrison, Weights & Measures

WV Code 47-1-11 adopts NCWM Handbook 130, section "Uniform Engine Fuels, Petroleum Products, and Automotive Lubricants Regulation."

- ◆ Section 1.26 defines Kerosene as "a middle distillate suitable for use as a fuel for heating or illuminating, the classification of which shall be defined by ASTM D-3699.
- ◆ Section 3 (Classification and Method of Sale of Petroleum Products) states the following:
 1. Sub 3.7.1. Kerosene shall be identified by the grades No. 1-K or No. 2-K.
 2. Sub. 3.7.2 Each retail dispenser shall be labeled as 1-K Kerosene or 2-K. In addition, No. 2-K dispensers shall display the following legend: "Warning - Not Suitable For Use in Unvented Heaters Requiring No. 1-K"

There are two types of kerosene, 1-K, which has a maximum sulfur limit of 0.04% mass and 2-K with a limit of 0.30% mass. Both of these must pass ASTM D 156, Saybolt color min. of +16. Saybolt +16 is described as "water clear" but is actually more clear than much of our tap water.

Those jurisdictions that enforce ASTM D-3699, which includes D 156 cannot allow a dyed middle distillate to be sold as Kerosene.

For the majority of jobbers that are buying from Marathon, and elect to purchase a dyed product, they will see "No. 1 Fuel Oil,

Dyed" on the Bill of Lading (BOL) or other such document. They must not confuse this with K-1 (1-K) Kerosene. Those purchasing 1-K will receive certification on the BOL.

Jobbers buying from other sources (outside of WV) may receive a BOL that states the product is "dyed kerosene," you must not sell the product as Kerosene. This can be sold as Fuel Oil, there are 9 different classifications (and specifications) of these products as per ASTM D -396. It is the responsibility of the seller to determine and label the product correctly.

Barton to Move Energy Bill Quickly

The House Energy and Commerce Committee has developed an accelerated plan to get the energy bill moving, with budget and policy hearings scheduled for Feb. 9, and a markup of last session's comprehensive energy bill (H.R. 6) scheduled for the following week. The bill could be on the House floor before President's Day.

While some Capitol Hill sources say that no substantive changes are planned for the bill, Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton (R-TX) has said that he wants to address issues surrounding the siting of liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminals. It has also been suggested that the committee could add language supported by House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO) aimed at lowering the price of gasoline by reducing the number of gasoline blends, or "boutique fuels," available nationwide. The bill also allows the EPA to waive for up to five days the Clean Air Act clean

fuels requirements if there is any significant fuel supply disruption. The bill is intended to help consumers facing high gasoline prices by placing a cap on the number of boutique fuels, which now stands at 45.

Meanwhile in the Senate, Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has said that Democrats intend to cooperate with Republicans in passing a new energy bill, but they will oppose opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling.

DOT Issues Hours of Service Proposal

The DOT's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has issued a new proposal for driver hours of service. The proposal itself actually isn't new; the agency just reissued last year's final rule in the form of a proposal and is inviting comments from stakeholders. PMAA believes that short haul drivers should be given the option to abide by either the old or the new rules, so long as they declare which regulations they are going to follow. PMAA will submit comments to FMCSA and continue to keep members apprised of any developments.

Petroleum Highlights



PTSA

Petroleum Transportation & Storage Association



HAZMAT Security Study May Lead To New Equipment Requirements

A new study recently completed by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) concludes that the security risk for HAZMAT shipments such as petroleum products transported in cargo tank vehicles can be significantly reduced by existing anti-theft technologies. The DOT has conducted "field operation tests" on a number of vehicle anti-theft technologies designed to prevent terrorists from commandeering a HAZMAT shipment while in transport. The report, scheduled for release next month, will likely be followed by a proposed rulemaking mandating retrofit of cargo tank vehicles with anti-theft equipment. Among the technologies tested for risk reduction include:

- Wireless communications systems with global positioning systems that could indicate the location of a truck and whether it was on route,
- Panic buttons for drivers,
- Ignition interlock system requiring driver login and fingerprints to start engine,
- Electronic manifests in place of shipping papers,

- Remote locking devices to prevent unauthorized removal of HAZMAT cargo,
- Onboard computers, which enable dispatchers to remotely lock, unlock, or disable a truck.

According to the DOT, the use of one or any combination of the anti-theft technologies would reduce security risks by 12 to 37 percent. The DOT has said the increased efficiency, security, and safety for HAZMAT transporters outweigh the costs of installing the technologies over a three-year period. The report concluded that the cost for a three-year phase-in of a mandatory equipment retrofit ranged from \$250 for the lower end technologies to \$3,000 per vehicle for the wireless communication with global positioning. PTSA is monitoring this issue and will oppose any new equipment retrofit requirements.

TSA Sets Fees for Driver Fingerprint and Background Check

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) issued a final rule recently establishing fees for driver background checks that the agency is required to perform on CDL drivers who apply for or renew a hazardous material endorsement. The TSA has adopted a three-tier fee system; \$38 for the collection of fingerprint and application information by the state licensing agency or designated TSA agent; \$34 for the security threat assessment conducted by the TSA and \$22 for the FBI criminal history investigation. The fees are to be paid by the CDL driver

upon application or renewal of a hazardous material endorsement. Under TSA regulations, individual states are **not allowed** to establish additional fees for driver background checks. The TSA driver background check program is scheduled to begin on January 31, 2005 for new applicants. The background checks on existing drivers will begin May 31, 2005 and occur at regularly scheduled HAZMAT endorsement renewal dates. State licensing agencies will advise drivers where and when to report for fingerprinting and information collection as part of the application and renewal process.

Fifty Senators Ask President to Release Balance of LIHEAP Contingency Funds

Fifty U.S. senators have signed and sent to President Bush a letter asking him to release the remaining \$200 million in contingency funds provided for LIHEAP as part of its Fiscal Year 2005 appropriation. The letter, which was coordinated by the co-chairs of the Northeast-Midwest Senate Coalition, Sens. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Susan Collins (R-ME), and Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR), cited continued high energy prices, cold weather and remaining energy debt from last year as reasons for release of remaining contingency funds.

Congress appropriated nearly \$1.9 billion for LIHEAP in FY 2005, plus \$300 million in contingency funds that can be released at the President's discretion. President Bush released \$100 million of the emergency money in December.

GOP Senators Appeal to Bush on Highway Funding

Twenty-four Republican Senators have written to President Bush to encourage him to consider supporting \$318 billion in funding for the highway bill. In the last session of Congress, the Administration would not support more than \$256 billion and differences between all parties led to the bill being stalled.

The Senate passed a bill in 2004, which guaranteed \$301 billion and provided contract authority for \$318 billion over six years.

Bush is due to submit his budget request the week of Feb. 7.

Delay Wants to Restructure EPA Appropriations Committee

House Majority Leader Tom Delay (R-TX) has proposed a complete restructuring of the spending process for Congress, including eliminating the Veterans Affairs-Housing and Urban Development (VA-HUD) Appropriations Subcommittee that currently funds EPA. According to Hill sources, Delay is pushing for the change to help ease the difficulty of moving bills through the appropriations process. The VA-HUD spending bill is always controversial. Important and popular programs that fall under VA-HUD jurisdiction must compete with each other for funding amid the growing federal deficit and tight budgets. Over the years, the Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) funding has been a casualty of the VA-HUD appropriations process. PMAA has fought for years to increase LUST funding to the states, but has found it next to impossible to

compete with spending for veterans programs and the like.

Delay's proposal already has been met with resistance, with appropriators expected to fight hard to protect their turf. GOP leaders are expected to make a decision on the proposed shakeup by next week, just as President Bush prepares to release his annual budget recommendations on February 7.

The Senate Appropriations Committee's new chairman, Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) has said he would review all proposals sent his way, but it's predicted that major hurdles will be raised.

In an interview earlier this week, Senate GOP Conference Chairman Rick Santorum (R-PA) acknowledged the problems that would arise should the House GOP plan go forward without the Senate in agreement. "Obviously, it's very difficult to conference bills if the subcommittees don't match up," Santorum said.

Johnson Named Acting EPA Administrator

Stephen L. Johnson has been named acting administrator of EPA. Johnson was named to the position to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Mike Leavitt, who was appointed by President Bush as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Johnson has been at the EPA for 24 years, most recently serving as deputy administrator.

The Bush Administration has not indicated how soon it would be before they appoint a new administrator, and some are predicting that it could be several months.

Oil Demand Growth Highest In Five Years

The American Petroleum Institute today released its summary of petroleum supply and demand statistics for December, the fourth quarter and full-year 2004. The report had some attention grabbing information! U.S. petroleum demand grew at its strongest rate in five years, led by a stellar 6.8 percent rise in demand for over-the-road low-sulfur diesel usage. It averaged nearly 3 million b/d for the year and now accounts for a full 75 percent of all the No. 2 oil consumed in America. For the first time ever, daily gasoline demand in the country topped 9 million b/d in 2004. It grew by a modest 1.3 percent, but oil industry veterans know that it wasn't that long ago that gasoline demand even in the peak summer-driving season came up short of the vaunted 9 million b/d mark. U.S. oil refiners - reaping some of their greatest profits in years - responded to the higher demand by producing record amounts of gasoline and diesel fuel. Underscoring how critically the U.S. supply/demand balance has changed, the country still needed record import volumes to make up to meet the rising demand. Overall U.S. petroleum deliveries for the year rose 2.2 percent to over 21.5 million b/d. Total imports surged 5.2 percent hitting almost 13 million b/d.

API didn't say so but it this ought to be noted: even the record high gasoline, jet fuel, and diesel fuel prices of 2004 failed to deter the boisterous rise in petroleum demand.

U.S. refining activity set numerous records in 2004. Gasoline and distillate fuel oil reached new production highs, and the average refinery utilization rate edged upwards to the highest annual rate in six years to 92.8 percent of capacity.

API also noted that jet fuel demand saw its first annual increase in four years. It grew by 2.2 percent to 1.613 million b/d, so has reclaimed some of the demand numbers registered prior to September 11th. Ironically, API's 2.2 percent number for jet fuel growth understates what many of the nation's airlines are reporting as they tally their year-end consumption figures. For example, the average rate of fuel consumption growth in 2004 for America West, Southwest, Delta, Continental, Northwest, American, and AirTran is a solid 5 percent - double API's number.

Convenience Store Update



State Budget Shortfalls May Lead To Gas and Cigarette Tax Increases

Large budget shortfalls are expected to hit nearly half of the states across the nation next year, raising the possibility of another round of local gasoline and cigarette tax increases. According to a new report by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington, D.C. based think tank, at least 22 states are projecting budget shortfalls that could average between 6 percent and 7.5 percent of general fund spending for the 2005-06 fiscal year. Although the projected shortfalls are less severe than in recent years, the report said they indicate that the sharp drop-off in revenue from 2001 to 2004 continues to threaten basic public services in the absence of additional tax increases. State and local governments have increasingly relied on so called "sin" tax increases on cigarettes and alcohol, and to a lesser extent motor fuel taxes to make up revenue shortfalls. Large deficits for the 2006 fiscal year are expected in California (\$6.7 billion), New York (\$6 billion), New Jersey (\$4 billion), and Ohio (\$1.4 billion). As a share of state budget, the largest percentage shortfalls are expected in New Jersey (15 percent), New York (14 percent), and Oregon (10 percent), the report said. Some state tax increases, such as

those in Ohio and New York, will expire next year and make it even more difficult for those states to cover their shortfall. Many states have already made steep cuts in spending over the past several years, leaving little fat on the bone and increasing the chances of significant new tax increases that effect petroleum marketers.

New Registration Forms Issued for Money-Order Businesses

The Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) has issued a new registration form for Money Services Businesses (MSBs) to use.

Many NACS members are MSBs and some, but not all, of those businesses must register with FinCEN. A retailer (or other business) is an MSB if it engages in any of the following activities in the amount of \$1,000 or more per individual per day:

- dealing or exchanging currency
- cashing checks
- issuing traveler's checks or money orders
- selling or redeeming traveler's checks or money orders
- transmitting money

An MSB does not need to register if it is only an MSB because it is an agent of another MSB. For example, a retailer that is an MSB only because it sells money orders issued by another MSB (such as Western Union or

Moneygram) does not need to register. However, if an MSB also qualifies as an MSB on its own (such as by cashing checks of \$1,000 or more per individual per day), it must register with FinCEN.

FinCEN will start accepting the new form immediately but will continue to accept the old registration form through June 30, 2005. The new form can be accessed on FinCEN's web site at <http://www.fincen.gov/msbregform01102004.pdf>.

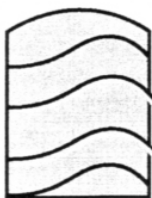
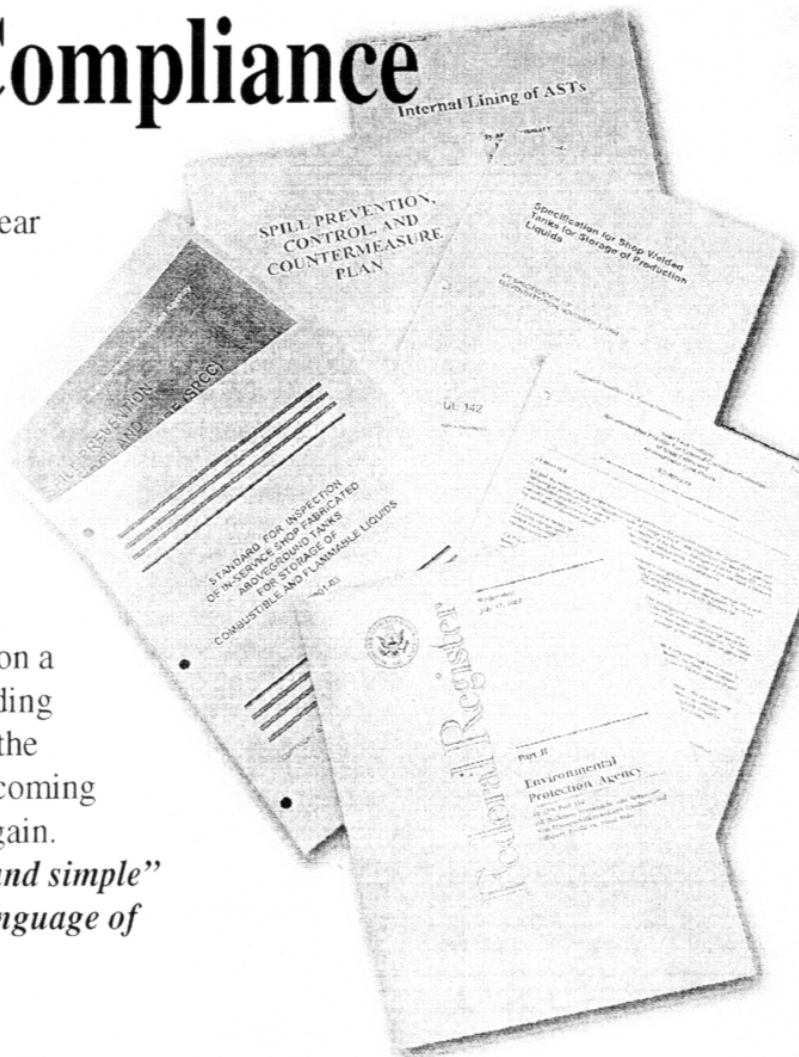
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Fewer Retailers Selling Cigarettes to Youth Under State Enforcement Efforts

Retailers continue to reduce sales of tobacco to children under age 18 according to data released recently by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Overall, the national retailer violation rate dropped to 12.8 percent in reports submitted by states in 2004, down from 14.1 percent reported in 2003 and 40.1 percent since the annual surveys began in 1996.

The results of the most recent survey show that 48 of the 50 states achieved the legislative goal of retailer sales of cigarettes to minors of no more than 20 percent, and 38 states achieved a retailer violation rate of no more than 15 percent. In 21 states, the retailer violation was 10 percent or below.

"It's a good sign that fewer stores are selling cigarettes to children, but we still have more to do if we hope to prevent another generation of smokers," Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said. "Keeping tobacco out of the hands of children is key to preventing the unhealthy habit that too often causes heart disease and cancer later in life. All of us must remain committed to helping our youth make the healthy decision not to smoke."

The findings are based on reports submitted by states in response to federal law established in 1992 restricting access to tobacco by youth under age 18. The law, known as the Synar Amendment, and its implementing regulations, requires states and U.S. territories to enact and enforce youth tobacco access laws; conduct annual random,

unannounced inspections of tobacco outlets; achieve negotiated annual retailer violation targets; and attain a final goal of 20 percent or below for retailer non-compliance.

"States that meet their Synar goals share certain characteristics," SAMHSA Administrator Charles Curie said. "Generally, these states employ a comprehensive strategy that combines vigorous enforcement efforts, political support from the state government, and a climate of active social norms that discourage youth tobacco use. These states utilize merchant and community education, media advocacy and use of community coalitions to mobilize support for restricting youth access to tobacco. SAMHSA will continue to provide extensive technical assistance to all states to implement these comprehensive strategies."

Data reported in fiscal year 2004 indicate that the District of Columbia failed to meet its negotiated retailer violation target. The District government is committing additional state funds for tobacco enforcement as an alternative to losing part of its SAMHSA block grant funding, as specified in the law. Two other states, Kansas and Texas, did not reach the 20 percent goal, but were within the margin of error allowed by SAMHSA.

The Synar Amendment was named for the late Representative Mike Synar of Oklahoma.

Retailer Violation Rates (FFY 2004)

State	Target	Reported
WV	20.0	10.3
OH	20.0	13.5
KY	20.0	6.7
VA	20.0	10.2
PA	20.0	10.8
MD	20.0	12.1

Americans Embrace Self-Scanning Checkout, Other Self-Serve Transactions

Consumers in a rush don't have to wait for a cashier at a growing number of retail establishments, including gas stations, airports, hotels and even post offices as self-scanning becomes increasingly popular.

Consumers self-checked out \$70 billion worth of merchandise in 2003, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. By 2007, that amount will nearly quintuple to \$330 billion, according to an estimate by IHL Consulting, which tracks the self-serve market.

Self-scan machines can now be found at Home Depot and Wal-Mart. For example, at Home Depot, nearly two out of every five transactions (39 percent) are scanned by shoppers.

And many more retailers are adding self-scanning to their traditional payment methods. For example, Hilton offers a way for guests to check themselves in, and this May, Hyatt will install automated kiosks that allow its guests to do the same.

Convenience stores also have jumped on the self-scan bandwagon, offering self-order deli stations and kiosks to purchase lottery tickets, in addition to pay-at-the-pump gasoline. Fast-food chains such as McDonald's, Burger King and Subway are testing order-yourself terminals. Early returns of those tests indicate that self-ordered meals generate receipts 15 percent higher than those taken by a staff member.

Continued on page 16...

Continued from page 15...

Even ATMs may soon offer bill-paying options, among other services. For example, at 7-Eleven stores this year, H&R Block clients can cash refund-anticipation-loan checks at its Vcom financial kiosk.

7-Eleven has designed an expedited process exclusively for H&R Block clients to approve checks up to \$7,500, and will provide clients with a competitive check-cashing fee. Vcom, short for virtual commerce, is 7-Eleven's proprietary financial services kiosk currently located in more than 1,000 stores.

The interactive, self-service machine allows customers to cash payroll, tax refund and government checks, conduct ATM transactions, money transfers, and purchase money orders and stored-value cards. More than 1,000 H&R Block offices are participating in this program.

At ExxonMobil's TigerMarket and On the Run convenience stores, customers can use a touch-screen kiosk terminal to access a variety of cash-based financial transactions. ExxonMobil launched E-Wiz in 2004 with kiosks in Memphis, Tenn. Powered by Premiere software provided by Info Touch, E-Wiz terminals provide customers with access to bill payment, money transfer, pre-paid products and services, such as wireless top-up, long-distance calling and mobile content.

"With this latest deployment Info Touch continues to build the largest national multi-retailer network of unattended self-service kiosks providing financial services for non-banked US consumers," states Hamed Shahbazi, chairman and chief executive officer of Info Touch. "As the number of non-banked consumers grows, programs like

E-Wiz will not only reap benefits by creating new revenue streams but also by delighting customers with more convenient financial services options."

"For the last five years running, the number-one source of consumer dissatisfaction is the amount of time spent waiting in line," Mike Webster told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Webster is vice president and general manager for the retail self-service solutions division of NCR, an industry leader in self-checkout.

We Card Training Seminars to be Held in March

The *We Card* program provides classroom training that is beneficial for those in the retail community involved in sales of age-restricted products like tobacco. Offered at no cost and as a service to retailers, *We Card* training sessions are taught by professional trainers. There is no charge for the seminars or the training materials.

You will learn:

- ✓ A summary of state tobacco sales laws
- ✓ How to spot fake IDs and which IDs can be accepted
- ✓ How to identify popular ploys used by minors
- ✓ How to use *We Card* materials to ensure accurate age calculations
- ✓ How to handle difficult situations when sales are refused
- ✓ How to handle second party sales

All business owners, managers and store employees are invited to participate in this valuable, interactive, skill-building session. Participants will receive free *We Card* POS and training materials.

The *We Card* Training Schedule is as follows:

Beckley

Tuesday, March 15, 2005
The Mountaineer Conference Center at the Country Inn & Suites
2124 Harper Road
(304) 252-5100 (for directions)
Session: 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Charleston

Tuesday March 15, 2005
Holiday Inn Charleston House
600 Kanawha Boulevard
(304) 344-4092 (for directions)
Session: 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Parkersburg

Wednesday, March 16, 2005
Holiday Inn
225 Holiday Inn Drive
(304) 485-6200 (for directions)
Session: 10:00 a.m. to Noon

Wheeling

Tuesday, March 22, 2005
Ramada Plaza City Center
1200 Market Street
(304) 232-0300 (for directions)
Session: 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Morgantown

Tuesday, March 22, 2005
Holiday Inn Morgantown
1400 Saratoga Avenue
(304) 598-7550 (for directions)
Session: 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Martinsburg

Wednesday, March 23, 2005
Holiday Inn Martinsburg
301 Foxcroft Avenue
(304) 267-5500 (for directions)
Session: 10:00 a.m. to Noon

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Gasoline Price Resources Available from NACS

On Feb. 2nd, the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) releases its annual gasoline price education resource kit to help address consumers' concerns about gasoline supply and prices.

NACS' new online resource kit, "Gasoline Prices: The Impact of World, Local Events" (www.nacsonline.com/gaskit2005), addresses many of the issues that could impact the petroleum markets this spring. It includes a number of online backgrounders that look at the markets over the past few years to give perspective to the seasonal transition. It also examines the role that environmental regulations and crude oil prices, among other factors, have on gasoline supply and prices.

NACS releases the resource kit every Feb. 2 - Groundhog Day - because the petroleum markets today might be best compared to the movie *Groundhog Day*, where Bill Murray's character wakes up every day and finds that it unfolds, event-by-event, exactly the same as the day he had just experienced.

"Like the character in *Groundhog Day*, the petroleum markets experience similar conditions over and over -- except on a seasonal, rather than daily, basis," said NACS Director of Motor Fuels John Eichberger. "And this year could be the same."

Also, the first week of February traditionally marks the beginning of the spring transition to summer-blend fuel in the petroleum industry. Over the past five years, gasoline prices have increased an average of more than 30 cents per gallon between the first week in February and the time of the

seasonal high price, typically late May, Eichberger noted.

"However, this year is different in at least one respect - at a time when retail prices typically reach their lowest level of the year, in 2005 gasoline prices are instead at their highest level ever for this time of the year," Eichberger cautioned.

Among the most popular components of NACS' annual gasoline price education kits are the graphics, and this year's resource kit includes several, showing the cost breakdown of a gallon of gasoline, regional fuel requirements and factors influencing distribution.

Convenience stores sell an estimated three-quarters of all the gasoline purchased in the United States. The tools were developed to help educate the general public - including convenience store customers, legislators and reporters - about the factors influencing the petroleum market and the

1. Chocolate will be identified as a healthy food high in antioxidants.

Grocery Stores Continue Slow Decline In Consumer Usage

A new study by ACNielsen reports that "consumers made fewer trips to traditional grocery stores in 2004 as they sought greater savings, variety or convenience in other retail outlets."

ACNielsen's "Channel Blurring" study showed that the average American consumer made 69 trips to the grocery store in 2004, down from 72 in 2003. Every year since 1995, when ACNielsen U.S. began its annual analysis of consumer shopping patterns, the grocery channel has experienced declines in shopping frequency. That year, U.S. households made an average of 92 trips to stores in the channel.

Todd Hale, senior vice president, consumer insights, ACNielsen U.S., said, "There are certainly pockets of innovation within the grocery store channel where retailers are succeeding. However, as a channel, consumers are shifting their trips to formats where they can either save more money or accomplish more of their shopping in one trip."

Dollar stores have enjoyed the strongest long-term growth in household penetration - driven by the channel's rapid expansion - while supercenters have grown the most in terms of shopping trips.

According to Hale, "One hopeful sign for the grocery channel is that several chains

have rolled out or are experimenting with new store formats. Others are increasing their use of micro-merchandising and marketing to better meet the unique needs of shoppers within their trade areas. Only time will tell, but those efforts toward differentiation may help stem the loss of shoppers to other formats."

Grocery Manufacturers Unwittingly Funding Terrorists; Quantum Dynamics Has the Solution

Coupons have been a part of everyday lives since the late 1800s and are now responsible for saving consumers more than \$3 billion a year. "As a frugal shopper I get excited to see the Sunday paper so that I can begin clipping my way to a lower grocery bill," said Jennifer Deatherage, vice president of Quantum Dynamics LLC. "What many people do not know is that coupons have a dark side as well."

It is estimated that over 20 percent of all coupon redemption is fraudulent.

Annually more than \$150 million in coupon fraud funds terrorist activities. Money from coupon fraud is linked to the funding of the world trade center bombings (http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1998_hr/index.html).

Manufacturers are inadvertently funding terrorism. It is not their intention - they are just trying to sell products, but with the current coupon system it's virtually impossible to catch consumers and retailers who have decided to defraud the

system.

The Quantum Dynamics Coupon Card system is a simple solution to a complex problem. The consumers carry a single-use Coupon Card, which, with one swipe at the register, gives them the savings on all coupons available in their zip codes.

As long as they have purchased the product, and a coupon is available, they will see the savings instantly.

As the shoppers are walking down the supermarket aisle, they will see tabs that reflect the coupons available with the Coupon Card and their value. Manufacturers and retailers are linked through a central database, which allows bar codes to be matched up between products for sale and the corresponding coupons.

In short, a coupon cannot be redeemed unless a product is sold. Manufacturers have complete control over their coupons and can start or stop a coupon campaign instantly. The Coupon Card website allows them to manage campaigns as well as collect the most accurate demographics they have ever had. This allows them to better target the consumers.

Retailers will also benefit from the Quantum Dynamics system by seeing a significant reduction in shrink. Cashiers will no longer have to scan individual coupons, and sorting and counting of coupons will be eliminated. This system also makes it impossible for a manager to use coupons to fix his financial statements. Furthermore, retailers will receive reimbursement from manufacturers in days rather than weeks.

"As vice-president of Quantum

Dynamics, I have had the privilege of witnessing the creation of what I believe to be the most important new technology system in the history of couponing. Our ground-breaking, Patent Pending new system is due to hit the market late 2005, and we couldn't be more proud of the road we have traveled and the destination we are approaching. We are supremely confident that Quantum Dynamics and the Coupon Card will forever change the coupon industry," added Deatherage.

N.G. A. and People Solution Strategies Supermarket Store Management Release the 2005 Compensation and Benefits Survey

The National Grocers Association in coordination with People Solution Strategies is pleased to announce the completion of the annual 2005 Compensation and Benefits Survey. The survey is an analysis of information concerning compensation and benefits collected from the N.G.A. membership at the end of 2004. Past survey results were well received and fully utilized by the membership. N.G.A. expects that this survey information will assist users in the effective management of compensation and benefit administration programs.

At N.G.A.'s Annual Convention in Las Vegas, NV, February 8 – 11, 2005, the results of the survey will be shared with the convention attendees during the 2005 Supermarket Management Compensation and Benefits Survey Workshop

(February 10 at 8:00). There will also be discussion on how to develop strategies for determining salary increases, creating structured performance appraisals and developing paid time-off policies.

The annual survey compares its results to previous years, in addition to offering new salary information for all store level management positions, information on pension 401-K programs and health care offered plus more. For more information on how to obtain a copy of the survey please contact Karen Voorhies at (703) 516-0700.



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Top Of Mind Issues for Retailers, Manufacturers

CIES recently released its 2005 Top of Mind survey, pointing to competition and retailer-supplier relations as being the most important issues facing retailers and manufacturers in the coming year.

Interestingly, the issue of "competition" wasn't even included in the 2004 survey, and this year was the top concern in the total survey as well as just of retailers.

The survey is based on the responses of more than 300 executives from 65 countries.

The survey traditionally breaks out the survey responses three ways - overall rankings, retailer rankings, and manufacturer rankings.

The overall rankings are:

1. Competition
2. Retailer-supplier relations
3. Customer loyalty and retention
4. Technical standards/supply chain efficiency
5. Consumer health and nutrition
6. Formats, services and assortment
7. Food safety security
8. The retailer as brand
9. The economy and consumer demand
10. Internationalization of food retailing
11. Accountability (sustainability, social responsibility)
12. Employee/management recruitment/retention
13. Regulations

Noteworthy in the overall rankings is the fact that "consumer health and nutrition" moved up in importance from ninth last year to fifth this year, and that "food safety/security" moved

down from fourth to seventh, while "internationalization" went from fifth to tenth.

The retailer-only rankings are:

1. Competition
2. Customer loyalty and retention
3. Formats, services and assortment
4. Food safety security, which tied with Technical standards/supply chain efficiency
5. Retailer-supplier relations
6. Consumer health and nutrition, which tied with The retailer as brand
7. Accountability (sustainability, social responsibility)
8. Employee/management recruitment/retention
9. Internationalization of food retailing
10. The economy and consumer demand
11. Regulations

And the manufacturer-only rankings are:

1. Retailer-supplier relations
2. Competition
3. Consumer health and nutrition
4. The economy and consumer demand
5. Technical standards/supply chain efficiency
6. Internationalization of food retailing
7. Customer loyalty and retention
8. The retailer as brand
9. Food safety security
10. Accountability (sustainability, social responsibility)
11. Formats, services and assortment
12. Employee/management recruitment/retention
13. Regulations



June 6 – 8, 2005

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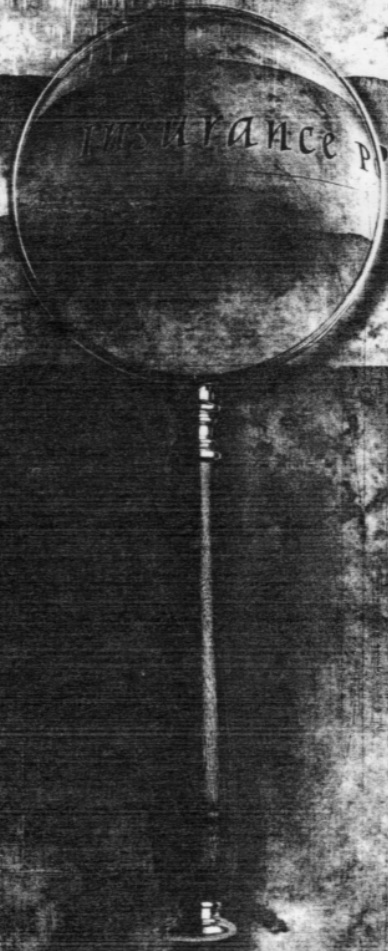
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President**

Legislative Directories are be mailed prior to the beginning of the session. Our publication, "**Inside the Capitol**" will begin covering the session at its onset.

Registration Information for the **UST Recertification Training** will be sent out by February 11, 2005.

OMEGA Changes Broker of Record on Health Insurance

Effective December 20th OMEGA has changed their broker of record on Health Insurance to Steve Grimm of City Insurance.

To learn more about the OMEGA/Carelink Program or to receive a competitive quote, contact Stephen Grimm/City Insurance Professionals at (304) 926-7411.

Continued from Page 1...

- **Solicit Suppliers.** The committee is soliciting suppliers to help us increase our active membership. We will call on some of our bigger supplier members and ask them to look at our membership list and see if there are grocers, convenience stores or petroleum jobbers who are not on there, but should be.

We have developed a list of "Call to Action" items for Members:

1. Have your payables department to **compare your list of vendors with the list of our Associate members.** Then submit a list of those complete with addresses and phone numbers to Traci in the OMEGA office so that membership packets and Trade Expo packets can be mailed to these individuals.
2. Send OMEGA a **list of your dealers** so that they can be invited to join. Most dealers can join for a very low fee and they will receive information that may keep them from contacting you so much.
3. Look in your communities and **come up with a list of independent grocers** that need to be a part of OMEGA.

**Help Out Your
Association!
Recommend a New
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Mark Your Calendar!

February 8-11, 2005
N.G.A. Convention
Bally's Las Vegas Hotel
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**March 9, 2005
Legislative Meeting &
Reception
OMEGA Headquarters**

**March 22 & 23, 2005
UST Re-Certification
Holiday Inn Charleston
House
Charleston, WV**

May 1-3, 2005
FMI Show
Chicago, Illinois

**June 6 - 8, 2005
OMEGA Golf Outing and
Trade Expo
Stonewall Resort
Roanoke, WV**

See Page 16 for the
We Card Training Schedule

N.G.A., People Solution Strategies and ej4 Unveil NGACampus.com

The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) in partnership with People Solution Strategies and ej4 is pleased to announce an important new addition for N.G.A.: The N.G.A. Center for Career Development and Performance Excellence at NGAcampus.com.

NGAcampus.com will be launched live at the 2005 Supermarket Synergy Showcase in Las Vegas, NV. The website will be complete supermarket e-learning solution. It is designed to be an important resource for training employees, developing a management team and competing more effectively in today's environment of competing with supercenters.

Fred Martels from People Solution Strategies said, "Today's managers need a broad range of skills such as leadership, supervision, communication, and financial management skills, legal and regulatory issues. They also need a solid understanding of the supermarket industry and an organization's business philosophy, policies and procedures."

The N.G.A. Campus value proposition will be continuously improving at no additional cost to members. Programs will be added on a monthly basis as a result of planned Campus additions, member requests, late-breaking issues, partner offerings, and N.G.A. initiatives. N.G.A. anticipates having over 100 courses available by the end of the

year, with more available each month throughout the long-term life of the Campus.

The N.G.A. Campus provides distance learning solutions that are highly customized to meet the needs of today's grocers. The approach utilizes ej4's proprietary Multi-Purposed Learning process to drive increased productivity and improved business results. Ken Cooper from ej4 said, "We utilize digital technologies to provide experiences that not only improve initial learning, but also support actual performance improvement with post-event learning." Additionally, "ej4's development process allows the NGAcampus.com to quickly create learning content and make it immediately available to supermarket members. If there is critical learning to provide, or important updates to communicate, we can literally create it and make it available online within days or hours," Cooper said.

Subscriber organizations receive unlimited distance learning access for a flat annual fee per number of employees, monthly live web cast events for training coordinators, and viewer tracking and test score logging. The N.G.A. Center for Career Development and Performance Excellence can help lower training costs, improve productivity, and increase bottom line. According to the N.G.A. 2005 Comp and Benefits Survey, employee training and management development were top human resource management priorities for 2005.

Frank DiPisquale, senior vice president of N.G.A. said, "An organization's

employees are a direct link to their customers. In many instances, store employees are the people who most influence the customer's decisions as to whether they ever shop there again. More than ever before, the role of every manager in an organization requires strong interpersonal and leadership skills as well as a passionate commitment to employee development and outstanding customer service."