

BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS // VOL. 30, NO. 10 // OCTOBER 2019



On Display: Marketing Products
for the Holiday Season

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— DISCOUNTS —



MIRA MEMBER EXCLUSIVE

Members with questions call the MIRA office at 1-800-666-6233



**We're America's #1 propane tank exchange brand.
We fuel good times!**

Maybe you've seen us on a display in front of a store. More than 50,000 retailers sell Blue Rhino. Or perhaps you've seen us on a gas grill or fire pit. Millions of Americans trust Blue Rhino to fuel their propane appliances. At Blue Rhino, we're known for the care we put into every propane tank. We're also synonymous with convenience – because when you need propane quick, there's probably a Rhino nearby.

PRICING:

- Effective August 14, 2019, the cylinder price is \$10.50 for exchange and \$37 for new. These prices are for both C-Stores **and** Grocery stores. These prices are locked for 3 years from August 28th 2019 through August 15, 2022. Pricing for current Blue Rhino customers, who are also MIRA members, will be adjusted to these rates.

**To sign up for this program, call MIRA at (800) 666-6233 or
complete this form and email it to info@MIRAmw.org.**

MIRA MEMBER ID#: _____

CONTACT NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME OF STORE: _____

STORE LOCATION: (If Multiple Locations attach Store List)

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

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BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS
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features



RECAPPING THE SHOW

MIRA's 21st Annual Holiday Food & Beverage show attracted nearly 1,000 attendees who came out to sample, see and purchase products for the holiday season. There were 113 booths however, Republic National Distribution Company (RNDC) and MIRA's own Benchmark each had well more than 50 vendors participate.



COVER STORY // ON DISPLAY: MARKETING PRODUCTS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

This is the time of the year when grocers and customers fall right into the holiday season. Whether it's Happy Halloween, Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah or just Happy Holidays, store owners and managers have long-prepared for the season or they should have, according to suppliers. The holiday season for retailers is what the tax season is for accountants – it's busy.



IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY

It's all about family and that is the driving force behind how Tony Franchi lives his life. Franchi was born in Detroit and still lives in the Detroit metro area. He has been married to his wife Karen "for 36 wonderful years" and they have two children, Alyssa and AJ. "I love spending time with my family," said Franchi. "I also enjoy a good Italian meal at some of my favorite restaurants around the Detroit area."



chairman's message

PAUL ELHINDI // MIRA CHAIRMAN

The End of the Year Wrap

Summer has faded and the Fall and Winter seasons are upon us. This means we are close to wrapping up a full year with the rebranding of our organization under MIRA. The transition was a tremendous success and we have achieved better

acceptance and status from the media, elected officials, and regulators.

The MIRA Board of Directors worked hard all year and we are all grateful for the crucial volunteer work that they perform. Board members sporadically find themselves no longer able to serve on the Board due to personal or professional commitments which pre-empt them from actively participating. This is completely understandable and is part of the cycle many organizations must tackle through the elections process. As MIRA bylaws necessitate, nominations for the Board of Directors, followed by elections, will be conducted shortly. I ask each of you to thoughtfully consider recruiting and nominating members, especially retailers, who can best actively represent you on the Board. Board members influence how MIRA functions and their decisions directly impact your business and future plans.

It's prudent to the success of any business to develop a one, three, and five-year business plan. Establish your business plan and refer to it regularly to monitor if goals set are being achieved. Make corrections accordingly if your business outcomes are varying from the direction of your targeted goals. Keeping up with current industry trends by providing the latest and highly sought after products and services is key to customer retention. Include your customers in the decision making process by actively seeking-out and being receptive to their product requests and suggestions. Adding new items to the product mix can increase sales by attracting new customers and maintaining customer loyalty.

Just like you develop a plan for your business for the upcoming year, MIRA must set plans for the future. We are continuously evaluating the programs that are offered. Some are added while others are deleted for lack of execution. We need your feedback on the performance of current programs and the development of new ones. Please don't hesitate to communicate any ideas and suggestions or ask for assistance. MIRA staff is always ready and willing to assist our members. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MIRA Accepting Nominations for 2020 Board of Directors

It is time to exercise your right to help choose MIRA's Board of Directors for 2020. Any voting member of MIRA may be nominated to serve on the Board of Directors.

To be eligible, you must be a member in good standing for no less than the prior 12 months, and you must be nominated in writing on or before Friday, October 25, 2019. All nominations require the support of 10 additional members in good standing or a majority vote by the nominating committee.

The election results will be tallied on Tuesday, December 3, 2019.

MIRA urges members to nominate candidates who will devote their time to represent the independent food, beverage, and petroleum industries with professionalism and integrity.

Please send your nominations, with supporting signatures, on or before Friday, October 25, 2019 to the MIRA Nominating Committee | 5779 West Maple Road | West Bloomfield, Michigan 48322. For more information, contact MIRA President & CEO Auday Arabo at (800) 666-6233 or aarabo@miramw.org ■



'Scotch & Cigars' Night Goes Down Smooth

Over 40 guests gathered on September 5th to enjoy great conversations amongst MIRA members while partaking of fine cigars and scotch. The event was organized by the Political Action Committee (PAC) to raise money for our Michigan PAC Fund. The fund helps build the relationships and momentum needed with elected officials to advance our values in Lansing.

This was a record-breaking event for the Michigan PAC and will be the first of many entertaining and worthwhile events organized by the PAC Committee in the coming months. The PAC Committee would like to thank Saad Abbo for hosting the event at his home and Mike Mitchel for bringing live music to the event. This event would not have been possible without their efforts.

The PAC is funded entirely by private contributions and the success of our first Scotch and Cigar Night shows the commitment our members have to MIRA. Thank you to everyone that attended!

Upcoming events: Ohio will host a Hookah Night for MIRA members in early November. Details to follow. ■





Recapping the Show

MIRA's 21st Annual Holiday Food & Beverage show attracted nearly 1,000 attendees who came out to sample, see and purchase products for the holiday season. There were 113 booths however, Republic National Distribution Company (RNDC) and MIRA's own Benchmark each had well more than 50 vendors participate.

In addition to 18 new vendors, the event had several celebrity sightings including NBA Champions and Detroit Bad Boys Isiah "Zeke" Thomas, James "Buddha" Edwards and Mark "Silk" Aguirre representing their own Cheurlin Champagne. Tommy "The Hitman" Hearn also made a

knock out appearance stopping by several booths.

You can watch videos and see photos from the event on MIRA's website and the MIRA Facebook page.

The show featured more of an open floor plan from previous years, with wider aisles. Attendees also munched on coney dogs from the National Coney Island cart at the back of the showroom at Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, Michigan.

"The feedback was quite positive," said Kristine Zrinyi, MIRA's Event Coordinator, "but we will not have the show on a Monday again, it just doesn't work for

attendees and vendors. There are too many conflicts, so we are looking into another day of the week."

MIRA hosts the largest liquor show in the state. "We were excited to have celebrities make an appearance," said Zrinyi "We are talking about bringing them back for our Spring show."

Although all vendors had current and potential customers inquiring about products, the Cheurlin champs definitely attracted a crowd. "Isiah and his team were so engaging and had an active presence at the show," said Auday Arabo, MIRA President & CEO. "They are also selling a great tasting champagne. ■





ASK THE MEMBER //

What do You Like About MIRA's Holiday Food & Beverage Show and What Would You Like to See Changed?



"It is important to be at this show, because if we are selling a product sold at retail stores, then retailers should see the face behind the product. It is our first time at the show with our company and I think the setup is great. It is bigger from the last time I was here, when I came with my brother who owns a liquor store. I do think they should add QR codes to badges, so we can scan the badges and easily download the information and follow up. It would be so much easier."

– NICK HANNAWA // SMART LIFE



"MIRA is so supportive of us, especially as a new product. They helped us make some good connections. They made it easy for us to be at the show as an accepted vendor. It is a great show. People are interested in our product. They are here for a purpose, but are also having a good time. The only thing I would like to see is more one-on-one introductions at the show. Maybe they could have a liaison between vendors and retailers. I would like more personal introductions."

– TIM DOWNEY // SOBER STICKS



"I love meeting people here. I bumped into old friends from the days I was at WJR. They now know the podcast I am on. Seeing Isiah Thomas and his new Champagne is very cool. I was bummed not to see Tito's Vodka. I am with a startup podcast company called NRM Streamcast in Farmington Hills. You can watch our shows on Smart TVs. I am here to network and see if I can find potential sponsors. It is a great opportunity for me."

– TOM MAZAWAY // NRM STREAMCAST



"This is our second year. Last year was great for us. It was a great group of people. It was very beneficial for us. I would prefer a different day than a Monday, maybe a weekend. We had a good time last year and I love year two. I got into this industry, because of bigger brands selling bad products. I created this four years ago. We are independents, so it's hard work. Being at this show helps. We added the car this year and next year, we will step it up even more."

– JACQUES EVANS // FLOH VODKA



"There is a variety of products at the show, all these food items here. It is nice to be able to taste different liquors to decide what you want to buy. We show our products here and we get a lot of customers from this show. The customers see our products here. They don't necessarily buy at the show, but we get the leads and go back and close the deal. Our health, wellness and beauty products are a new line of items for us and we are showing them here at the event. We have an inspired organics grocery line and specialty grocery line also on display here. They are fairly new for us."

– TONY FRANCHI // LIPARI FOODS



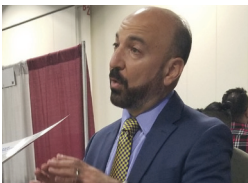
"We have been coming to the show for years. Right when we walked in the doors, I could feel it was going to be a good show. So far this has been great. Handing out tickets to customers before the show is very beneficial. We end up seeing those very same people at the show. I think MIRA should continue giving tickets to vendors to pass out to customers."

– GARY HILL // HUNT BROTHERS PIZZA



"It is my first time at the show as a new employee of U.S. Ice and I really love it. We are seeing our customers and it has been great. MIRA does a great job working with vendors. We added an ice sculpture this year and it is getting a lot of attraction."

– DAVID KASSAB // U.S. ICE



"The people here are in our industry and it is important to see our customers. It is my first time here at the show and it has been good so far. I would like to set up the day before and would like more of a cubicle type of wall instead of the booths we have here. I would like to see more sectioned off booths."

– DANNY YALDOO // COOLER FABRICATORS



petroleum news & views

EDWARD WEGLARZ // MIRA DIRECTOR, PETROLEUM

Act Professionally to be Treated Professionally

We often receive calls in the MIRA office asking for help with issues between MIRA members and government departments, regulators, or suppliers.

And we can usually separate the calls into two categories: those members who really want to operate a proud, professional business, and those (often non-members) who want to continue to operate in the “gray area”.

It’s a challenge to operate in total compliance now-a-days, because sometimes the marketplace is functioning ahead of legislative rules and regulations. You find yourself driving on a new road with no speed limit or directional signage.

When in doubt try just doing the right thing! Deep down, we all know the real difference between right and wrong.

Let’s discuss what to do when you do receive a notice of violation from a hazardous material storage tank inspector, or a write-up from a food safety inspector, or a letter for a zoning or occupancy violation.

First of all, open your mail! Delaying your response is not in your best interest. Is the notice valid; are you in violation? Can you correct the violation quickly? If so, do it, and send documentation to the inspector verifying that the shortcoming has been addressed and rectified. Do it sooner, rather than later. If you feel the notice is incorrect start the appeal process immediately. Contact the inspector or your attorney and begin addressing the issue. Waiting until the final days of the grace period is bad idea. You are less likely to get a favorable response by waiting until the 59th day of a 60-day grace period to contact the inspector.

If you or your employees need training, schedule the training immediately and notify the inspector outlining the action you have taken. He may extend the grace period, especially if you act during the early days of the original grace period. Keep in mind that training schedules are usually planned and scheduled well in advance. So, there may be a delay in getting employees enrolled in a training class. Don’t wait until the last minute.

Perhaps you need to obtain some repair parts or hire a professional in order to comply with the notice. Again, notify the inspector early during the grace period of the action you have started.

If wanted to be treated professionally, act professional. And treat inspectors with respect. If you respect them, they’ll treat your business with respect. ■





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With Gallon Drinks!!!**
Buy 18 cases
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9 Refreshing Summer Flavors



c-store news & views

JIM GREEN // MIRA VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Foodservice is the Only Remedy From Long Term Growth

Convenience store operators are always looking for what is going to help them grow their business. As retailers are faced with continual declines in the cigarette category, uncertainty of fuel sales and a reduced number of transactions, many retailers have looked for e-cigs/vape, CBD, Wine, Beer and Liquor to provide the answers for growth. When looking at these categories, I don't believe any of them individually or collectively will provide the solutions C-store retailers are looking in order to sustain growth.

This past year many retailers and industry articles I have read have stated that the e-cig/vape category can help make up for the decline in cigarette sales in the tobacco category. What have we seen recently, states like Michigan and New York banning flavors with federal efforts coming to restrict or outright ban the sales of most flavored nicotine vapor products. This category will only get more restrictive. Walmart announced it will stop selling all electronic cigarettes, as it sells through its current inventory. Citing "regulatory complexity" and "uncertainty" around vaping. I personally believe that once all the rules of the road are in place, e-cigs and vape products will have a negative effect on the tobacco category. Consumers will actually use these products to help eliminate or reduce the use of combustible cigarettes as originally suggested when these products started to emerge.

I don't think CBD will provide the long-term answers for C-Store either. As lawmakers put pressure on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to expedite the path for lawful marketing of hemp-derived CBD products, the rules of the road

will be defined. Once that happens, you'll see large manufacturers own the category and more retailers, both small and large, and online sales capturing a large segment of these sales while driving down sales, price and margins.

As for wine, beer and liquor, Walmart and Target are looking to add more to their shelves. Recently Steve Bratspies, Walmart's chief merchandising officer said, "So alcohol is something that I think we're under-shared in, under-spaced in and we've got plans to address that as we go forward." Early innovators in store-label wine have been Trader Joe's, Costco and Whole Foods. Last year, Walmart introduced a private-label wine called Winemakers Selection at \$11 per bottle, while Target and Kroger also have their own private-label wines. Not surprising but another growing part of the alcohol industry has been delivery. Amazon has been making inroads into delivering alcohol, such as applying for liquor permits to open a delivery hub in San Francisco. Kroger is also investing heavily into delivering alcohol.

There is no substitute for developing foodservice if c-store operators want to compete and grow in the years to come. A great example of this is Wawa and Sheetz which are continuing to open stores in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania, where they have a cumulative total of 25 c-stores and some already think that is enough. Chains like Sheetz and Wawa are revamping their strategy to focus on promoting food first, then gas and convenience second. C-stores need to pay attention to new demographic wants and needs, such as cleanliness, healthier foods and better grab-and-go options. I would urge all independent c-store operators to develop a food service identity. This is not something you have to develop from scratch on your own. There are a lot of branded solutions that can help you. I would also encourage our members to contact S. Abraham and Sons, Inc, Team Sledd or McAneny Brothers. All three of these valuable MIRA partners have food service solutions that are designed to help any level of retailer. ■

Transforming the World of Food



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For More Information Please Contact Our Midwest Region:

BRAD MILLER, Senior Director, Market Development, **630-743-9226**

CRAIG LITTLE, Market Development Manager, **262-357-4403**

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FORT WAYNE D.C. 4815 Executive Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46808



government relations report

JUAN ESCAREÑO // MIRA DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Nobility in the True Sense

"...It is for a noble end that the brave man endures and acts as courage directs."

– ARISTOTLE

I remember with fondness the long days and nights my parents worked to give my siblings and I opportunities not afforded to them. My parents worked, and saved, and continued to work so that they could be their own boss. As a young adult, I couldn't understand why they had to sacrifice so much for us but now I understand what they were working towards. What they strived to instill in us was virtue and an appreciation for what we have.

As I continue to meet and know more retailers, that nobility of action is present. To paraphrase Aquinas, "virtues are good habits in action." The work of owning, and growing a business can be a noble act for one's self and their family.

This attitude, or more accurately, habit, is characteristic of the work MIRA does every day for its members. Our daily *modus operandi* is making the playing field in retail fair for you and your family. To quote Aquinas once more, "habits are learned inclinations." You have a team here at MIRA that knows how hard you work, because all of us here have participated in this field of work directly as shop owners, children of shop owners. We know your challenges personally.

This nobility is awe inspiring and I challenge you to carry that same attitude towards our efforts to level the playing field in retail. In September, over 40 members and non-members attended the PAC fundraiser for MIRA. It was great to see the

PAC Committee comprised of business owners like yourself, to step up and make this event a success.

Our efforts will echo much farther if we break the attitude of complacency, when it comes to behaving as a unified voice in the public arena. The people who make decisions that impact your business only respond when they see power behind our calls, emails, and gatherings. Power responds to power. Your participation in MIRA through our programs, trainings, and most importantly, our government relations is a representation of power for elected officials and bureaucrats that make decisions.

This nobility is a reflection of our inward desires to achieve success for our families. When politicians see this in person, it brings your reality into their view. But I know that time and distance are huge impacts on your abilities to participate. So what is the answer? I challenge you to contribute to our PAC funds in your respective states.

A contribution to MIRA's PAC helps amplify your voice with our 4,500 members. A contribution puts your issues on the front burners of the elected officials. It becomes a tool to gather support and expand our opportunities.

We continue to work on issues that are relevant to our members and so your PAC contributions go directly to issues impacting you. In Michigan we have worked with state legislators, so that in October two bills will be introduced to help liquor licensee holders. In Ohio, we are beginning to look at outdated regulations stifling convenience stores and supermarkets. In Illinois, we are looking into property tax increases about to impact our members in Cook County. Across the nation, we belong to national associations to keep an eye on legislative changes that may impact you.

A collective action through our MIRA PAC is an investment for your business and future endeavors. This investment in MIRA brings an invaluable asset to you and the 4,500 other members of MIRA. ■

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communications corner

VANESSA DENHA-GARMO // FOUNDER, DENHA MEDIA GROUP

Your Fortress of Success

Four strategic positions for strong leadership

A fort is defined as a fortified building or strategic position. It's also viewed as military construction or building designed for defense. Leaders need that same protection against a breakdown inside an organization.

The FORT has four solid pillars that make up its design.

A FORT can be defined as a strategic position or a castle like your own home, company, organization or office. That strategic position takes four approaches. Or, you can view the place as being built on solid ground with four solid beams.

The FORT and its four pillars can create a solid foundation and strategic plan to lead. So, remember FORT: Focus, Organize, Research and Time Management.

F Focus on the plan at hand.

Every leader should have goals for himself as a leader and for the organization. In order to achieve the goals, you have to focus. Do you have daily agendas, short and long-term goals? Do you have strategies in place to achieve the tasks at hand? Lists, calendars and agendas help people stay focused.

O Organizational skills help the leader stay focused.

Your notes, briefcase, office, car, departments – all need to be organized and in order. Clean environments offer clarity of mind. Often people clear their desks of every other thing other than the project they are working on. This is part of being organized and focused.

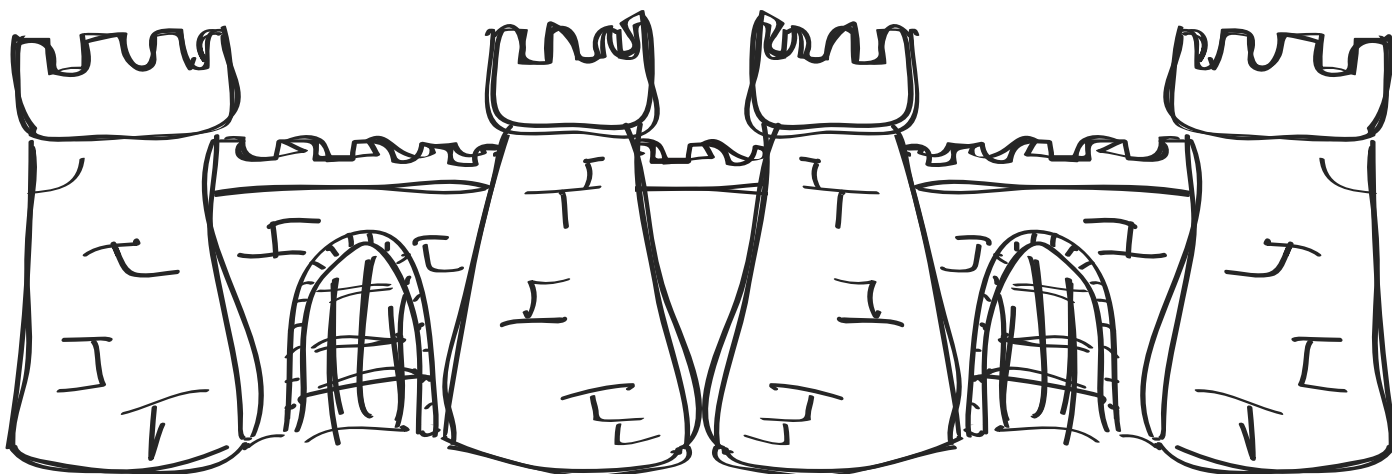
R Research helps you find the information you need.

You don't know what you don't know sometimes. I had a client who wanted to start a service business and throughout a coaching session, repeatedly said, I don't know how to do that. I asked, what can you do to find out or learn how to start a business. Leaders research. They look for answers. This is a skill I picked up as a journalist – search for facts – find information.

T Time management is essential to success.

We all have the same hours in the day. How we manage that time will determine what we accomplish. We have all heard of finding balance in life. Maybe you are challenged to find balance every day. Every area of your life demands your time. How will you manage that time? How will you find balance?

Perhaps consider using a visual. Actually, draw a FORT with the four pillars and a strategy and plans for keeping each pillar standing strong. ■





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MIRA MEMBER EXCLUSIVE



michigan lobbyist report

MATT MINER // CAPITOL STRATEGIES GROUP

Michigan Legislative Updates

MICHIGAN LEGISLATURE COMPLETES STATE BUDGET

With under a week to spare in the fiscal year, the legislature shipped a balanced state budget to Governor Whitmer for her signature. While significant issues persist between the administration and legislature, wholesale budget vetoes are not expected. Republicans in the House worked with their Democrat counterparts to craft a bi-partisan School Aid budget that expends a record amount of funding for Michigan's schools. Overall, state spending increased over previous years, but Governor Whitmer had generally negative views of the legislature's actions. "These budgets are a mess," said Whitmer. "After taking time off for a two-month summer vacation and a weekend getaway on Mackinac Island, Republicans are playing more shell games with the state budget so they can buy a phony talking point that they're spending 'record money' on roads. And now, with less than a week until the budget is due, they're planning to leave town for break again without having transmitted a single budget to my office."

The war of words will likely continue long after this process is concluded, but as former Senator Harry Gast, longtime Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee always reminded the public, "While the Governor proposes budgets, it is the legislature that disposes the money for the budgets."

ROAD FUNDING PASSES LEGISLATURE WITHOUT GAS TAX INCREASE, FIGHT CONTINUES

The legislature passed a transportation budget just before the budget deadline of October 1st that did not include an increase in the state's gas tax against the wishes of Governor Whitmer. The fiscal year 2019-2020 budget will infuse \$400 million in General Fund dollars into the Michigan Department of Transportation to pay for a list of road funding projects. Specifically, the legislature allocated \$400.0 million for state, county, city, and village road construction projects.

These funds would be used to do the following:

- \$132 million is designated to fulfill the 2015 Road Funding Plan a year ahead of schedule. Funds would be distributed to individual road agencies according to PA 51.
- \$25 million is designated for the Local Bridge Program.

- \$243 million is a one-time appropriation for road and bridge construction.

- First priority for these funds are four critical bridges.
- The remaining funds will be distributed according to the bottom PA 51 proportions.

Governor Whitmer dubbed these expenditures as woefully inadequate stating that "It's time for Republicans to stop playing games and put a real road funding solution on the table that keeps drivers safe, ensures our roads get fixed with the right materials and mix, and makes road repairs now so costs don't keep going up over the long run."

It's hard to believe that the end of the budgeting process is just the beginning of the road funding process, but that's what you should expect to read about this fall. Discussions on a gas tax increase are just about to begin.

GOVERNOR EXPANDS RECYCLING WITHIN STATE GOVERNMENT, IS A BROADER RECYCLING PLAN IN OUR FUTURE?

Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued Executive Directive 2019-16 in order to track the amount that each department recycles and recycling capabilities. With this, the Department of Technology, Management and Budget are to submit progress reports to Whitmer bi-annually beginning on March 1, 2020, and will be open to the public. Not only this, but every department and agency included in the directive must provide the governor with a report of their recycling every six months.

Whitmer's expectation for implementing this executive directive is to create jobs, combat climate change and protect public health, while continuing to catch up to more progressive recycling efforts made by neighboring states. The DTMB will continue to work alongside the Department.

This action begs the question, when is a comprehensive recycling effort coming for the general public? Interested trade groups have already begun to meet to discuss ways to increase recycling, with an eye on bringing a more comprehensive solution to the table that does not include expanding the already struggling bottle deposit law. Bringing business interests and environmental interests together has been the mission from the perspective of the outside interest groups. Workgroups are expected to continue amongst the interest groups in Lansing with hopes that a consensus can be agreed upon and legislative action can begin. ■



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michigan lottery report

BRIAN O. NEILL // MICHIGAN LOTTERY COMMISSIONER

Wheel of Fortune Instant Game Taking Players to Hollywood

The Michigan Lottery's instant games are favorites for avid and casual players. The chance to win big cash prizes instantly have made them a large part of the Lottery's success with sales surpassing \$1 billion the last two years.

The Lottery continuously researches game concepts to identify those that will have the strongest appeal to players and maximize the outstanding performance of the instant game portfolio. The Lottery's ongoing research shows that players are drawn to games that offer a second chance opportunity to win prizes.

With that in mind, the Lottery has teamed up with Wheel of Fortune® to give players a second chance

option offering the chance to win the trip of a lifetime. In addition to instant win prizes, players can enter non-winning ticket codes for a chance to win a trip to Hollywood to play one "America's Game."

Five lucky players will win an all-expenses paid VIP trip for two to Hollywood to participate in a Lottery players-only version of the Wheel of Fortune® Big Money Spin event and the chance to win up to \$1 million!

Winners will receive:

- Two round trip coach airfares to Los Angeles
- Three nights deluxe hotel accommodations in Los Angeles
- Ground transportation to and from the Los Angeles airport, hotel, and Sony Studios
- Hollywood sightseeing tour for two
- Tour of Sony Studios for two
- Tickets to watch a taping of Wheel of Fortune in the live studio audience
- Participation in the Big Money Spin event
- \$500 spending money

We expect the chance to win up to \$50,000 and this game's unique second chance opportunity to generate excitement with players and increase traffic for retailers. ■

INSTANT TICKETS // PULL TAB TICKETS

NEW INSTANT TICKETS:

On sale October 1st:

- IG 308 – 7-11-21 Tripler – \$1
- IG 315 – Wheel of Fortune – \$2
- IG 321 – Emerald 10's – \$10

INSTANT GAMES SET TO EXPIRE:

Expiring October 7th:

- IG 208 – \$1,000,000 Gems – \$10
- IG 219 – Bonus Cashword – \$3

Expiring November 4th:

- IG 240 – Stocking Stuffer – \$1
- IG 241 – Unwrap the Cash – \$2
- IG 242 – Holiday Magic – \$5
- IG 243 – Holiday Gems – \$10
- IG 244 – Triple Bonus Cashword – \$10

NEW PULL TAB TICKETS:

On sale October 1st:

- MI 554 – Ca\$h Cannon – \$1
- MI 561 – Break the Bank – \$2

PULL TABS SET TO EXPIRE:

Expiring October 15th:

- MI 509 – Stamped Gold – \$1

Expiring November 12th:

- MI 507 – Brews on First – \$1
- MI 520 – Jumpin' Jack Cash – \$2

TICKET ACTIVATION: Retailers are reminded to activate all game tickets before putting them on sale to ensure winning tickets may be redeemed by players.



**MICHIGAN
LOTTERY™**

About 97 cents of every dollar spent on Lottery tickets is returned to the state in the form of contributions to the state School Aid Fund, prizes to players and commissions to vendors and retailers. In the 2018 fiscal year, the Lottery provided more than \$941.3 million for Michigan's public schools, its fourth record contribution in row. Since it began in 1972, the Lottery has contributed more than \$22 billion to support public education in Michigan. For additional information, follow the Michigan Lottery on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and online at www.michiganlottery.com.

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PROGRESSIVE

\$10

\$2

michiganlottery.com

LUCKY 7SM

CURRENT ESTIMATED FAST CASH JACKPOT
\$140,000
This game pays 100% of the Jackpot

WINNING NUMBERS:

10	23	30	07
53	42		

YOUR NUMBERS:

12 U Jackpot	57 U \$500	41 U \$50	33 U \$200	06 U \$20	24 U \$1,200
02 U \$4,000	15 U \$10	21 U \$50	46 U Jackpot	55 U \$100	17 U \$50

lottery.com

BIG Bowling Bucks 

CURRENT ESTIMATED FAST CASH JACKPOT
\$140,000
This game pays 20% of the Jackpot

PRIZE LEGEND

10 PINS.....	20% of JACKPOT
9 PINS.....	\$600
8 PINS.....	\$100
7 PINS.....	\$50
6 PINS.....	\$25
5 PINS.....	\$10
4 PINS.....	\$3
3 PINS.....	\$2

FRAME 1 THROWS:

8	30	03	31	21
3	19	40	22	36

**NEWEST GAMES
ON SALE OCT. 27**

- **OVER 99% OF FAST CASH PRIZES ARE REDEEMABLE AT RETAIL**
- **EASY TO SELL - NO ACCOUNTING, NO DISPENSING, NO DISPLAY SPACE**
- **PRINTS RIGHT FROM THE LOTTERY TERMINAL**



Overall odds of winning a Fast Cash game are from 1 in 2.88 to 1 in 3.50. Overall odds of winning the Progressive Jackpot: 1 in 400,000. Knowing your limits is always the best bet. Call the Michigan Problem Gambling Helpline for confidential help at 1-800-270-7117.





ohio lobbyist report

TERRY FLEMING // TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

Guns and Vapors

Ohio Governor DeWine has weighed in on guns after a tragic shooting in Dayton last month. He has suggested a bill on both Red Flag Laws and more detailed background checks. There are several Republican representatives in the General Assembly who agree with the Governor on the need for these bills, but it appears as if Republican leadership is hesitant to address the issue.

On vapors, the Governor has indicated he may emulate the Michigan Governor and ban all vapors in Ohio, but again the legislature is not fully behind this. CBD's have also got the attention of the Governor and legislature and the Department of Agriculture is making surprise inspections at retail stores across Ohio to check products that contain CBD oil, but don't list it on the label.

As for MIRA members, the Ohio House passed a resolution declaring the last week of September as

"Independent Retailers Week" and sent the resolution to MIRA President, Auday Arabo. MIRA also met with leaders of the tobacco coalition of Ohio and was updated on latest issues involving both tobacco and vapors. In addition, meetings have been scheduled between MIRA and the Ohio Beer and Wine Association to discuss Ohio liquor laws.

On the political front, President Trump visited Ohio twice in September and Democrats held a debate in Westerville, Ohio. Even though the next statewide elections are three years away many think Governor DeWine will not seek a second term and there appears to be a battle brewing between Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Lt. Governor Jon Husted to be Ohio's next Governor.

The Ohio General Assembly will be active for the rest of 2019 and then next year will be a short session year, as all House members and half the Senate will be up for election. MIRA would be happy to hear from members on any subject or any legislation either pending or you'd like to see enacted, just contact MIRA at (800) 666-6233. ■



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On Display: Marketing Products for the Holiday Season

■ BY DENHA MEDIA GROUP WRITERS

This is the time of the year when grocers and customers fall right into the holiday season. Whether it's Happy Halloween, Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah or just Happy Holidays, store owners and managers have long-prepared for the season or they should have, according to suppliers.

The holiday season for retailers is what the tax season is for accountants – it's busy.

"They need to draw attention to the holiday season," said Tony Franchi, Senior VP of Sales for Lipari Foods. "Stores that put a little counter and few items up expect customers to notice and they don't. They need to build big displays that scream the holiday."

Popular holiday products include bakery items. "Kids love the decorated cookies for Halloween," said Franchi. "For Christmas, Thanksgiving and Hanukkah, think decorated pastries but you have to bring them in early. The customer will see them and even if they don't buy it at the time, they will come back for it. Retailers need to order enough. Holiday products run out."

The products for the holiday need to be a step up from products they carry all year-round. "Offer high quality products," said Franchi. "The best retailers know their customers and they bring in higher-end items during the holiday. Customers want to impress their guests. You need to bring in deluxe inventory, such as bigger shrimp. Customers will pay for it. Retailer make mistakes by not



stocking shelves with this type of products. You also need to plan ahead and not only bring enough product in, but also bring it in four to six weeks early, not two days before the holiday.”

A solid marketing plan can help businesses navigate the hectic sales days, such as Black Friday and Small Business Saturday, the two days after Thanksgiving.

At MIRA’s 21st Annual Holiday Food & Beverage Show, MIRA members saw, sampled and purchased products for their stores, as they head into the holiday sales season.

Suppliers were on hand not only to share the products but to display how retailers should be marketing items at their businesses.

Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC) had numerous tables set up at the show.

“I came from a market in Texas where gift sets weren’t as popular, for whatever reason” said Steve Rochow, RNDC Executive VP in Michigan. “But here, the Michigan consumer really likes them. My suggestion is to place them front and center. They are very impulsive items. They are not only impulsive that day, but the consumer will remember them when they think of employees or gifts they need to buy and will come back and get them for them, even two weeks later. Visibility is important.”

GETTING SOCIAL

Incorporating social media is vital in a marketing plan. If you don’t market on social media during the holidays, you’re missing out on a lot of potential customers.

Social media is a strategic business tool for businesses wanting to share information about their brand. You can also use these platforms to engage customers and the larger community. It also allows businesses to increase awareness and sales during the busiest shopping season by leveraging targeted social media campaigns on special offers.

Each social media platform has its own audiences and knowing how to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others will impact your campaigns.

Last month, at MIRA’s 21st Annual Holiday Food & Beverage Show, social media was used to share moments including Isiah Thomas speaking about Cheurlin Champagne at his booth with fellow Detroit Pistons Bad Boys.

“We are excited and delighted to bring Cheurlin Champagne here from France,” said Isiah Thomas speaking from the show. “We are from the old region

of champagne. We really enjoyed people stopping by to meet the Bad Boys and taste our champagne. We are the owners of this Champagne, not just endorsers of it.”

DIGITAL ADS

Founder and CEO of Geektown USA, Al Zara, explains that independent retailers, need to have a road-map in place to compete with the big boys. “There has to be an emotional pull/desire created for the consumer to sway them away from the big box retailers,” said Zara. “It’s important during this time to focus on the fact that they are independent retailers, the mom and pop shops, or the local grocery store down the street that is a staple in the community. Digital ads need to speak about their brands, and what they mean to the public. They should make sure they are utilizing social media, as well as digital display ads, such as Google Ads, to ensure people are finding them. It’s harder than ever to compete with the Walmart’s, Amazon’s and Target’s of the world, so the brand message in the digital space is crucial.”

Geektown USA recommends local, authentic products or services as an example of a local ad with a real image or video. “I would shy away from using stock images and videos for ads,” said Zara.

There are also things retailers shouldn’t do when it comes to marketing during the holiday season and year around. “Don’t pour all of your money into advertising space ‘gimmicks’ that many companies are offering, but don’t offer a genuine solution,” said Zara. “There are many companies that were in the traditional advertising space like print, radio and TV that have now created a digital marketing division inside their company. They hire a sales force to go out there selling small independent companies on a dream, but with no real backing behind any of it. Retailers need to do their research, vet out companies, and ensure there is a strategy behind every move they make.”

The holiday season can make or break a business, so it’s important to make sure they are spending money to advertise themselves during those times, but ensure the money is going in the right places.

“It’s always a good idea to have a door-buster/ loss leader deal, although you may be losing on one item, you will make it up on the other items in store,” said Zara. “The goal is it get them to your door. I would suggest spending more dollars on social media advertising due to the data that companies, like Facebook, have on people. You can really target the right audience from the data that is provided.” ■



Cutting the Ribbon at RNDC's New Livonia Location

■ BY DENHA MEDIA GROUP WRITERS

Last month, the Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC) cut the ribbon on their new facility in Livonia, Michigan located next to Amazon.

"We moved from Brownstown to Livonia," said Joe Gigliotti, Regional President. "This is the largest building we have ever built, 515,000 square-feet. We are pretty excited about it."

The size will accommodate the service they are providing to retailers, "70% of liquor distribution in the State of Michigan will come out of this location," said Steve Rochow, Executive Vice President in Michigan at the Ribbon cutting ceremony last month. "The City of Livonia has been very welcoming. Mayor Dennis Wright came out when the event broke ground."

Many members of the city and the Livonia Chamber of Commerce have welcomed the new distribution company to the city. "It is great to see a dynamic company with growth potential find a home in Livonia. Instantly, Republic National Distributing Company became one of the city's top-20 employers," said Dan West, President & CEO of the Livonia Chamber of Commerce. "This is significant project with 515,000 square feet of new construction, which comes two years after Amazon built a new one million

square-foot fulfillment center nearby in Livonia."

Logistics is often an influencer when companies look for specific locations. "Livonia is in a prime central location, with great public services and two major freeways," said West. "Livonia and Western Wayne County is in a logistics and supply-chain hub. This makes our community perfect for these types of significant projects, which are wonderful for our economic development."

The size and the location to the highway, was a factor in the move. "It was an old (auto) plant and the facility was just perfect," said Gigliotti. "The City of Livonia has been great to work with."

Livonia Mayor Dennis Wright also shared the news about the facility opening at his annual State of the City address this past Spring.

The company not only touts their friendly work environment, but is also responsible for the majority of the liquor distribution in the state. "We are a family owned company," said Rochow. "We treat everyone the same. I have worked with the family for 25 years and they are fantastic people to work with."

The company is working on reducing delivery time and improving customer service. They also have a shuttle robotics system that will improve accuracy. "We have some very talented team members," said Rochow.

He also credits MIRA for their enhanced relationship with the retailers. "MIRA has helped us with communication to educate the retailers about gift sets, new items, and we have done tastings with them," said Rochow. "They have done a great job communicating with the members about what we do and what service we provide to retailers."

RNDC had several booths on display at MIRA's 21st Annual Holiday Food & Beverage Show showcasing their gift sets and many other products. ■





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MIRA rebate program details:

- Minimum order of \$800, must purchase weekly to qualify.
- We service PA, OH, MD & NY.
- 2% Non-tobacco / non cigarette rebate.
- Plus and extra 1% if purchasing energy supplements
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Customer must purchase these categories to qualify:

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- Smokeless & other tobacco
- Energy supplements
- Coffee

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It's All About Family

■ BY DENHA MEDIA GROUP WRITERS

It's all about family and that is the driving force behind how Tony Franchi lives his life. Franchi was born in Detroit and still lives in the Detroit metro area. He has been married to his wife Karen "for 36 wonderful years" and they have two children, Alyssa and AJ. "I love spending time with my family," said Franchi. "I also enjoy a good Italian meal at some of my favorite restaurants around the Detroit area."

The Senior Vice President of Sales at Lipari Foods has been with the company for 33 years. He is new to the MIRA board, on it for one year now, but has long seen the value of being a member. "I strongly believe in what MIRA's message is to our industry and what they stand for in supporting strong independent grocers," said Franchi. "Their leadership is very strong and all the board members come from all different businesses that help the independent business owners. I love sharing ideas with the board members."

The board is engaging. "I like the interaction we have with different types of people from different types of businesses. There are retailers, distributors, and manufacturers and we talk about different ideas that support the independent retailer."

His two favorite hobbies are golfing and boating. "I also support the Corvette Museum in Bowling Green Kentucky. I am a Corvette enthusiast," he said. "The boating is nice, because I have a family cottage. My kids go up there, my entire family goes there. I love the water."

He sports a pontoon boat these days. "I drive slow," he said. "I do a lot of eating and entertaining on the boat. It seats about 20 people."

Franchi's family enjoys the lake life on Runyan Lake in Fenton, Michigan about 30 minutes away from home. "The cottage has been in his wife's family for more than 60 years. My wife grew up there. She used to spend the summers up there. It was her summer vacation spot and now, it's become a vacation home for my kids."

Franchi started golfing at 10 years old. He grew up in Detroit and learned how to play golf at Redford



Golf Club at 7 mile and Telegraph. "I played nine holes for 50 cents," he said. "I am still learning the game. I am not a great golfer, but I like to dress up in my golf clothes."

He enjoys the Annual MIRA Golf Outing. "It is one of my favorite outings, because I get to hang out with my customers. I also like golfing with my son. It is all about family," said Franchi.

Lipari Foods was founded in 1963, the next step in the career of Jim Lipari, who began by delivering specialty products from the back of his Buick station wagon. Today, Lipari Foods is a leading independent "perimeter of the store" distributor in the Midwest, delivering a wide range of quality bakery, dairy, deli, packaging, seafood, meat, specialty grocery, foodservice, confectionery and convenience food and beverage products to more than 7,500 customers across 16 states.

"The people at Lipari Foods are the best in the industry and we all have similar ideas when it comes to customer service," said Franchi. "We say at Lipari: 'the customer is always first'. I also love to work with customers to support their retail business and to help them grow and prosper with new ideas that come across our desk every day. The grocery business is always changing and we are always working to keep up with the changes." ■



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Michigan First to Ban Flavored Vape Products

■ BY ASHOURINA SLEWO // DENHA MEDIA GROUP



Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced on September 3rd that flavored vape products would be banned. This decision positions Michigan as the first state in the country to ban flavored vape products.

This ban, says Governor Whitmer, is being done in an effort to protect the youth who are largely enticed by the flavored vape products.

“As governor, my number one priority is keeping our kids safe and right now, companies selling vaping products are using candy flavors to hook children on nicotine and misleading claims to promote the belief that these products are safe,” she said in a statement. “That ends today. Our kids deserve leaders who are going to fight to protect them. These bold steps will finally put an end to these irresponsible and deceptive practices and protect Michiganders’ public health.”

Agreeing that this must be done, Auday Arabo, MIRA President & CEO said, “It’s all for the health and safety of our youth, which we support. We have to protect the citizens.”

In an ongoing study done by the

United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), there have been 380 cases of lung illness reported from 36 states, including Michigan. Six deaths have been confirmed; no deaths have been reported from Michigan.

Every reported case had a history of e-cigarette or vape use, says the CDC.

“Most patients have reported a history of using e-cigarette products containing THC,” reported the CDC. “Some patients have reported using THC and nicotine and others have reported the use of e-cigarette products containing only nicotine.”

Despite these facts, says the CDC, they do not yet know the exact cause of these illnesses.

“The investigation has not identified any specific e-cigarette or vaping product (devices, liquids, refill pods, and/or cartridges) or substance that is linked to all cases,” said the CDC.

The CDC has released interim recommendations to healthcare providers, health departments, and the public. “Until we know more, if you are concerned about these specific health risks, CDC recommends that you consider refraining from using e-cigarette or vaping products.”

According to the Detroit Free Press, the ban will prohibit the online and retail sales of flavored nicotine vaping products.

The ban, however, will not ban unflavored and/or tobacco flavored vaping products, a spokesperson for Whitmer told the Detroit Free Press.

The ban does not come

through an executive rule from the governor. Instead, the decision to ban these products came through Michigan’s administrative rules process. This process allows state agencies to create regulations and policies that act as laws once they are authorized.

Once complete, the ban will immediately be implemented.

A spokesperson for Governor Whitmer told the Detroit Free Press that once implemented, the ban will last a total of six months. Retailers throughout the state will have 30 days to become compliant with the law.

After the six months are up, Governor Whitmer will have the option to renew the ban for another six months. After such renewal, “she will either have to go through the formal rules process through the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Administrative Rules or ask the Legislature to enact a bill that would enshrine the ban into state law,” says the Detroit Free Press.

While the debate surrounding the use of and sale of vape products has been ongoing for several years, many are on the same page, when it comes to whether these products should be regulated or banned altogether.

“We hope the feds regulate it. We need some type of baseline as far as regulation goes,” explained Arabo. “Some don’t consider it tobacco, others do. There is a lot of debate about the safety, especially with the interchangeable pods, so there needs to be some uniform clarity, especially with so many folks that are getting sick from vaping.”



Despite the quick nature in which the ban is being implemented, much of the reaction from retailers has been neutral as many seek out the best way to comply by the ban.

“Not too many of our members have been calling to complain,” explained Arabo. “But most members have been calling to figure out what the new laws and regulations will be. They just want to make sure they’re compliant with the law.”

Other states, including California, New York and Illinois are also calling for a ban of the flavored vapes. “We need to tell Michigan stores to stop selling flavors immediately,” said Arabo.

NATIONWIDE ACTION

Not long after Governor Whitmer’s decision to ban flavored vape products, President Trump’s Administration announced their own plan to ban the sale of most flavored vape products.

According to the New York

Times, “Alex M. Azar II, the health and human services secretary, said that the Food and Drug Administration would outline a plan within the coming weeks for removing flavored e-cigarettes and nicotine pods from the market, excluding tobacco flavors. The ban would include mint and menthol, popular varieties that manufacturers have argued should not be considered flavors.”

This decision comes as the Trump Administration and Food and Drug Administration have faced pressure from lawmakers and public health officials in addition to parents as the popularity of vape products, especially flavored products, have grown among teens.

According to a statement, the FDA intends to finalize a compliance policy in the coming weeks that will prioritize “the agency’s enforcement of the premarket authorization requirements for non-tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes.”

This will include mint and

menthol flavors, effectively clearing the market of any non-tobacco flavored vape products.

“The Trump Administration is making it clear that we intend to empty the market of flavored e-cigarettes, in hopes to reverse the deeply concerning epidemic of youth e-cigarette use that is impacting children, families, schools and communities,” said Azar in a statement. “We will not stand idly by, as these products become an on-ramp to combustible cigarettes or nicotine addiction for a generation of youth.”

This decision from the administration comes as preliminary numbers from the National Youth Tobacco Survey showed a continue rise in the use of flavored vape products among teens.

In particular, the data shows that, “more than a quarter of high school students were current (past 30 day) e-cigarette users in 2019 and the overwhelming majority of youth e-cigarette users cited the use of popular fruit and menthol or mint flavors.” ■





Your Billion Back Rebate Check is Coming Soon

CareWorks

In June, the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation Board of Directors approved a \$1.5 billion rebate to Ohio employers with an active BWC policy. According to the BWC, it will distribute rebate checks to nearly 180,000 public and private employers. The BWC expects to begin mailing checks to public employers on September 26th, followed

by private employers through October 24th. This will mark the fifth time since 2013 the BWC has returned at least \$1 billion to Ohio employers.

The \$1.5 billion will equate to 88 percent of the premiums Ohio employers paid for the 2017 policy year, which ended June 30, 2018. The majority of rebate will go to private employers, while public entities are estimated to receive approximately \$164 million in rebates.

For even more workers compensation savings, check out MIRA's group rating

savings program. MIRA members are saving over \$276,667 for the current policy year. MIRA and CareWorks Comp can analyze your company to determine the best alternative rating program for you.

For a no-cost, no-obligation program analysis, simply call MIRA's Program Manager Hayat Kore-Martin at (614) 526-7245 or email her at kore@careworkscorp.com. You may also submit an online application at <https://www.careworks.com/groupratingapplication/>. ■

express lines



Equal Pay Act Now in Effect in Illinois

Offending employers can be fined for violations

■ BY NACS ONLINE

Amendments to Illinois' Equal Pay Act went into effect on Sunday, September 29th, leaving employers little time to adjust their hiring practices, reports the National Law Review.

Under the amended EPA, employers and employment agencies may not:

- Screen applicants based on their current or prior wage or salary history, including benefits or other compensation
- Request or require an applicant's salary history as a condition of being considered for employment
- Request or require that an applicant disclose his or her salary history as a condition of employment

Employers also are prohibited from seeking an applicant's salary history from an applicant's

current or former employer.

Employers are not prohibited however, from providing information about the compensation or benefits of a position or discussing an applicant's expectations about compensation or benefits. An employer also would not violate the EPA if a job applicant voluntarily discloses his or her current or prior compensation, provided the employer does not consider the voluntary disclosure in deciding whether to offer employment or in setting compensation.

An employer who violates the law may be subject to:

- Damages
- Special damages not to exceed \$10,000
- Injunctive relief
- Costs and reasonable attorney's fees
- Civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000 for each violation for each employee affected

To avoid fines and lawsuits, companies recruiting in Illinois should remove any questions about an applicant's previous pay or benefits from their job applications and related documents, both online and hard copy. Employers may not require employees to sign contracts or waivers that prevent them from disclosing information regarding their own wages, salary or benefits. Employers, however, may prohibit human resources personnel from disclosing other employees' wage information without first obtaining written consent.

Previously, the Act prohibited pay discrimination where employees were performing substantially similar work on jobs that required "equal skill, effort and responsibility." The amended Act refers to employees who are performing substantially similar work on jobs requiring "substantially similar skill, effort, and responsibility." ■



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If you'd like to manage energy use to save money at your business, visit dteenergy.com/savenow.



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Feeding America Comments On New USDA Report Findings

■ BY ERICA SACRA // THE SHELBY REPORT

A new report released September 4th by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that one in nine households (11.1%) in the United States encountered difficulty at some time during 2018 in providing enough food for their family. This represents a decline of 0.7 percentage points from last year and is the lowest rate since prior to the recession. There was a particularly large decline in food insecurity among households with children, which went from 15.7% in 2017 to 13.9% in 2018 and represents the lowest rate in at least 20 years.

While the declines are certainly good news, 37.2 million Americans still face hunger, including 11.2 million children. Some of the groups experiencing above-average rates

of food insecurity include households with children led by single parents, households with children under age 6 and households with low incomes.

Among people who are food insecure, approximately one-third have incomes above 185% of the federal poverty line, and most do not qualify for any federal nutrition assistance programs. For these households, charitable food assistance may be the only option.

“While we are encouraged by the decline in food insecurity rates, the fact that more than 37 million Americans struggle to put food on the table is unacceptable,” says Kate Leone, chief government relations officer of Feeding America. “Additionally, the Administration has proposed a rule change to SNAP that could jeopardize this progress. By its own estimates, the proposed rule

would take SNAP benefits away from more than 3 million individuals and increase food insecurity. We urge the administration and Congress to protect SNAP.”

Feeding America is leading efforts against this SNAP proposal and encouraging others to do the same. The public has until Sept. 23 to submit comments here to the USDA on how dangerous this proposal is to the health and well-being of many Americans.

The USDA’s report, Household Food Security in the United States in 2018, is published by USDA’s Economic Research Service and reports on data collected in December 2018. The report also presents statistics on how much households spent on food, and the extent to which food-insecure households participated in federal and community food assistance programs for 2018. ■

Gas Station Coffee Becomes a Destination

Leading convenience store brands compete directly with QSRs and coffee shops with coffee service—and they’re winning

■ BY NACS ONLINE

No longer is getting coffee at a convenience store an afterthought—it has become a destination. Today’s leading brands compete directly with quick-service restaurants and coffee shops. Though the underdog in comparison to some worldwide chains, in this competition c-stores are winning.

Consumer ratings of gas station coffee have consistently improved since September 2016. Nearly 60% of convenience store coffee ratings are now positive.

Gas Buddy’s new “The State of Gas Station Coffee” report reveals the top brands and the highest-performing states, as well as the fact that that gas station coffee is getting better each year. This special report takes a closer look at the past three years of coffee

ratings, leveraging the insights provided by more than 12 million active monthly users.

According to a recent Technomic survey of consumer perceptions of coffee brands, Cumberland Farms ranks at No. 4—directly ahead of Dunkin’. Indeed, 12 of the top 20 U.S. brands for coffee quality are convenience retailers. The list includes popular brands like Kwik Trip, Ricker’s, Sheetz and Pilot Flying J.

Coffee has become big business for retailers. Wawa now sells an estimated 200 million cups of coffee annually, and GasBuddy data show that Wawa’s 2018 National Coffee Day promotions resulted in an 8.4% visit uplift, compared with the previous week’s traffic. To further compete with coffee shops and QSRs, Cumberland Farms recently launched a coffee subscription service that conveniently

provides two cups per day for a low, monthly fee.

National Coffee Day 2019 is Sunday, September 29, and national convenience store chains, QSRs and coffeeshops are offering a host of deals and freebies. For example, Cumberland Farms is offering a free hot or iced java, with all added flavor shots, creamers and sweeteners—including pumpkin spice—on the house. Pilot Flying J is giving away any size hot or cold coffee, while 7-Eleven is offering any size coffee for \$1.

Among all foodservice beverages, hot dispensed make up the largest percentage of sales at 12.4% in 2018, according to the NACS State of the Industry Report of 2018 Data. Coffee accounted for more than 71% of sales volume in the category, averaging \$40,252 in annual sales per stores, SOI data indicate. ■

Labor Department Lifts Overtime Pay Threshold

The final rule extends coverage to 1.3 million more U.S. workers

■ BY NACS ONLINE

On September 24th, the U.S. Department of Labor issued its final overtime rule, making 1.3 million additional American employees eligible for overtime pay under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). When the final rule takes effect on January 1, 2020, the threshold for time-and-a-half pay will increase to \$35,568 from \$23,660, a level set in 2004.

On average, the convenience and fuel retailing industry already pays store managers more than the federal minimum threshold for overtime pay. The average salary for c-store managers is \$45,179, according to NACS State of the Industry Compensation Report of 2018 Data. The increased salary threshold likely will be felt at the assistant manager level, where the average salary is \$29,533.

“For the first time in over 15 years, America’s workers will have an update to overtime regulations that will put overtime pay into the pockets of more than a million working Americans,” said Acting U.S. Secretary of Labor Patrick Pizzella in a press release. “This rule brings a commonsense approach that offers consistency and certainty for employers as well as clarity and prosperity for American workers.”

The final rule updates the earnings thresholds necessary to exempt executive, administrative or professional employees from the FLSA’s minimum wage and overtime pay requirements, and it allows employers to count a portion of certain bonuses/commissions toward meeting the salary level. The new thresholds account for growth in employee earnings since the currently enforced thresholds were set in 2004. In the final rule, the department is: Raising the “standard salary level” from

the currently enforced level of \$455 to \$684 per week (equivalent to \$35,568 per year for a full-year worker);

Raising the total annual compensation level for “highly compensated employees (HCE)” from the currently-enforced level of \$100,000 to \$107,432 per year;

Allowing employers to use nondiscretionary bonuses and incentive payments (including commissions) that are paid at least annually to satisfy up to 10% of the standard salary level, in recognition of evolving pay practices; and revising the special salary levels for workers in U.S. territories and in the motion picture industry.

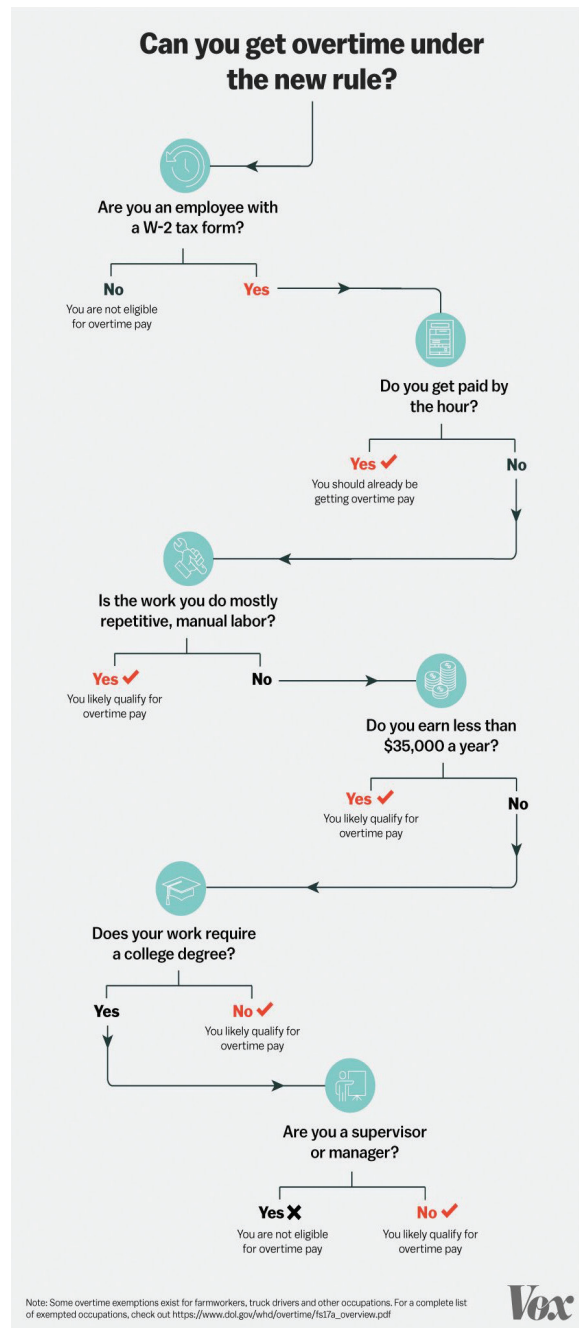
“[The] rule is the thoughtful product informed by public comment, listening sessions, and long-standing calculations,” said Cheryl Stanton, Wage and Hour Division administrator.

“NACS welcomes the Department of Labor’s announcement of its final overtime rule,” said Jon Taets, NACS director, Government Relations. “Much of the final rule released yesterday reflects the comments that NACS filed with the Labor Department both in 2015 and, more recently, this summer. By sticking to the traditional methodology for calculating the salary threshold, the department has proposed a much more reasonable standard than that which was finalized back in 2016 before being invalidated by a federal court,” Taets said. “While legal challenges to the new rule are possible, we recommend that all convenience retail operators immediately begin reviewing their payroll systems to ensure that they will be in compliance with the new overtime rule on January 1 of next year.”

As reported in NACS Daily, the Labor Department released its proposal to

update the overtime rule in March.

California, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington are among the states which have already made moves to change the salary level requirements for overtime pay or are weighing such moves. ■





Grocers Work to Get Small Stores Right

Retailers scale back store size to offer speed and convenience

■ BY NACS ONLINE

In a large field northeast of Des Moines are two signs touting the future development of “The Shoppes at Prairie Crossing: A mixed use development.” Eventually, the area will have a strip mall, a hotel, condos, restaurants and numerous other establishments, but for now, the only current tenant is Hy-Vee Fast & Fresh, the Midwest grocer’s updated take on a convenience store.

According to Grocerydive.com, the brightly lit, 10,000-square-foot location sells donuts, chips and candy bars, as well as fresh meals, produce and some upscale offerings, like a \$75 bottle of Cody Road Rye Whiskey. Shoppers can also pick up their online grocery orders in bright red Aisles Online lockers outside.

It’s a cutting-edge store sitting near a field by itself, and Antonio Romeo, the store’s director, describes the move as an opportunity to get established before the neighbors arrive. “We’re just a little early out here for everything that’s going to happen. It wasn’t by accident,” he said.

To attract shoppers, Fast & Fresh features four aisles of wine and spirits, a walk-in beer cave and 12 local craft beers on tap that consumers can fill up in their Hy-Vee branded growlers and crowlers. New products, including brews, are posted on Facebook when they arrive.

The grab-and-go section includes Hy-Vee meal kits like ciabatta steak sandwiches and chicken cavatappi with vegetables, and pre-packaged meals of goulash, lasagna, beef enchiladas, sweet potato and kale chicken bowls, grilled salmon with long grain rice and cheesecake.

The store’s Mia Pizza station, with its wood-fired oven, does more in sales than the same concept housed in 14 other traditional Hy-Vee stores, including a 95,000-square-foot flagship store located 26 miles away. Hy-Vee credits aggressive promotions with attracting pizza fans. That includes buy one, get one pizza coupons sent to everyone within a three-mile radius shortly after Fast & Fresh opened.

Fast and Fresh isn’t the only slimmed-down concept Hy-Vee is testing. A short drive will take you to HealthMarket, a store that offers kombucha, cauliflower pizza crust, probiotics, fresh produce and lighter offerings from major brands like Ben & Jerry’s. In downtown Des Moines, Fourth + Court, which opened in 2017, caters to young shoppers and empty nesters alike, many of whom live in the three-story apartment building above the store.

Amid low margins and a competitive squeeze that promises to keep tightening, traditional grocers like Hy-Vee are trying to take back control with experimental formats that address weaknesses in their legacy stores—namely, speed and convenience.

Among other grocers looking to expand their business into more convenience store like locations, Publix recently reignited its Greenwise format, with three locations now open and eight more scheduled to open. Giant has also touted the early success of its urban format, Giant Heirloom Market, in Philadelphia, while Roche Bros. in the Northeast has moved into population-dense areas with its Brothers Marketplace format, now at four locations.

According to Neil Saunders, managing director with Global Data, a data analytics and consulting company, today’s grocers are cognizant of trends and they want to be cautious when introducing a new concept. He pointed to Tesco, which quickly ramped up its Fresh & Easy format rather than testing it in one or two markets first. The U.K.-based retailer soon found that its British-style ready meals, store locations and heavy assortment of Fresh & Easy-branded products didn’t resonate with U.S. shoppers. The experiment, which cost Tesco more than \$1.6 billion, resulted in the company leaving the U.S. in 2013.

“Retail is testing, trying out new formats, looking at things that might work,” Saunders said. “I think that will [slow down] over the next three or four years and we’ll actually start to see a more concrete roll out of some of these formats, not all of them being experimented at the moment will work.” ■



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MIRA works closely with these associations:



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