

Alabama Grocer

2023, ISSUE 1

Alabama Grocers Association

2023 Session Preview
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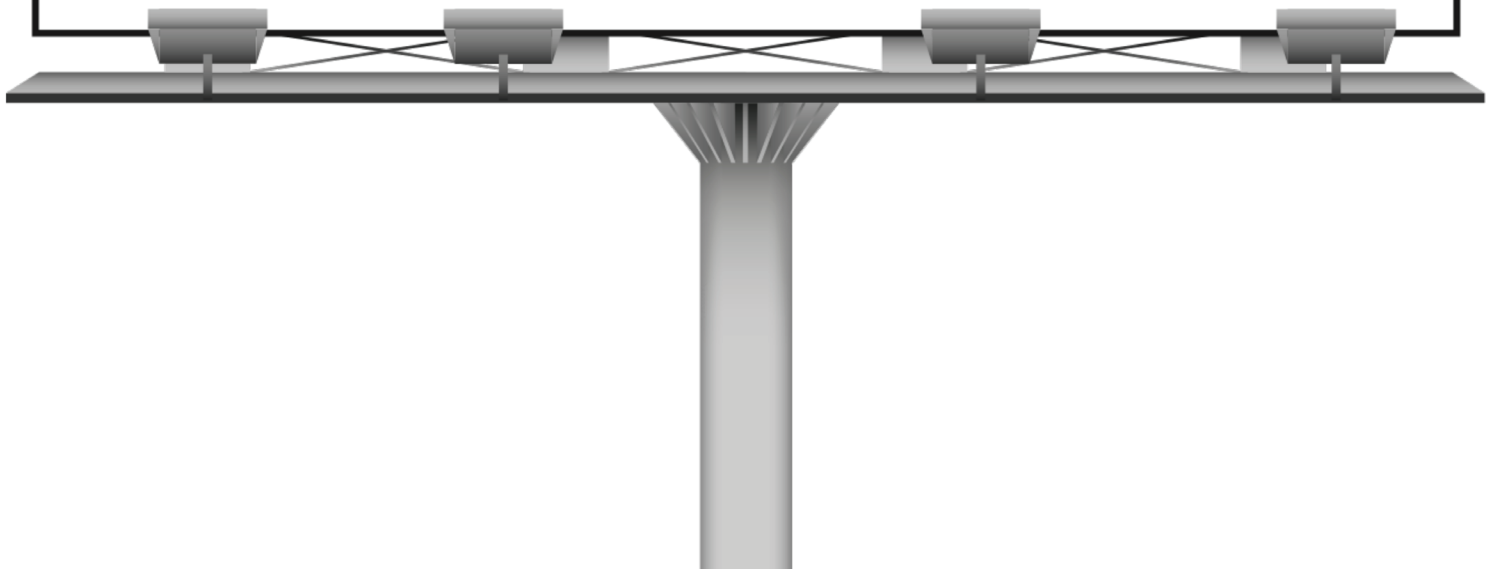
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Vendor of the Year
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**20
23 NEW
SEASON**

A Look Ahead



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FEATURES



Association News

Make plans to join us for our AGEF Golf Outing.



Annual Award Winners

Congratulations to our 2023 Retailer Wholesaler & Vendor of the Year Award Winners!



Association News

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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

THE STATE OF THE GROCERY INDUSTRY



Harold Garrett
President
Gateway Foods

WHAT IS IN STORE FOR 2023

So, let's think about this. To start making sense of what is going to be the future of our industry, we must look back to see what got us here.

First of all, the grocery business did not just poof into existence on March 19, 2020, although we seem to have an issue with anything before that time. Now, I am not saying that the early days of the Pandemic were not some of the most difficult of all our careers and should not be forgotten, but for the sake of this article, I want to go back further than just a couple of years. Many of us had several decades in the retail business before that, learning our trade, growing our business and adjusting to challenges as they came along.

Yes, I believe to look forward we must first look back to see how we got here. So let's be honest, this industry is and always will be built on customer service, fair pricing and keeping our stores clean and inviting to our customers. That is the foundation, which we have built upon since that first Piggly Wiggly in Memphis opened its doors, gave their customers the opportunity to walk around with a shopping cart, and help themselves to a clean well stocked store. The same is true today! Growing up in this business, I have had several mentors, who all seemed to have the same game plan, keep the shelves full, the store

clean and the employees friendly. That will always be what sets us apart.

Today we have of course evolved somewhat. Stores are bigger and offering a much wider selection of products. Some stores have all of the bells and whistles, offering games, gimmicks and anything to try to entice folks to shop at their stores. There is nothing wrong with going outside the box to grow your business, but I still hold on to the thought that people do business with people they like, especially in smaller communities.

Today, we as grocers have been the benefactors of a great deal of government aid, mostly driven by the aforementioned Pandemic, to help feed our nation during a time of fear and uncertainty. Now we must prepare for tomorrow, as the emergency Pandemic funds go away.

So, what about tomorrow? Do we just fall off of a cliff without the extra aid? Yes, the emergency benefits are going away, but many food stamp recipients were given increased benefits over the last couple of years. These benefits will remain. Supply chain issues seem to be clearing up, and product availability is getting much better. Inflation shows signs of slowing. By this I mean, it is beginning to look like milk and eggs will be affordable again soon.

Tomorrow we will realize that the pandemic is over. The virus that caused the pandemic will probably always be with us, but we will learn to live with it as we have others from years gone by. Tomorrow, we will probably figure out that we have survived one of the best/worst times in our careers. Tomorrow, we will probably realize that we are back to a point where we can start being grocers again, get back to filling those shelves, shining those floors and cases, and stop to spend a minute catching up with that loyal customer that has been coming in your store for years. After all, in my humble opinion, we are still in the people business. Keep customers happy, and they will keep coming back. Over the last three years, so much has changed, or has it? Nobody can accurately predict the future. I feel we make our own way in life and business. You only get one chance, so make the most of it.

Once again, I would like to say how honored it has been to serve as your chairman, and as my term draws to a close, I really want you to know how much I have been blessed by this group, you're the best!

Best Regards,
Harold



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2023 STARTING STRONG



Ellie Smotherman Taylor
President/CEO
Alabama Grocers Association

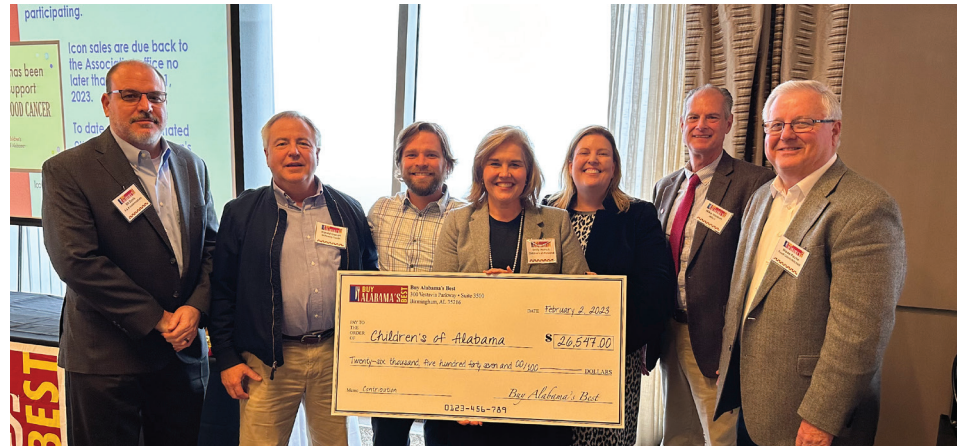
IT HAS BEEN A BUSY START FOR THE ASSOCIATION IN 2023

Following a very successful political election season for AGA and the SACK PAC, we celebrated with Inaugural Events on Monday, January 16th. AGA cosponsored the Alabama Agricultural Community Breakfast, which highlighted Commissioner Rick Pate of the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.



That afternoon, the Buy Alabama's Best Program provided Alabama food products for his open house at the Alabama Department of Archives and History. AGA congratulates all the winners of the November 2022 election cycle, and we are looking forward to the next four years.

On February 2nd, we celebrated the kickoff to the 2023 Buy Alabama's Best Program at our Retailer Luncheon. Retailers from all over the state gathered with Alabama food manufacturers and producers to discuss plans to promote Alabama products throughout the year



and to give back to our community by supporting Children's of Alabama. To date this program has raised over \$850,000 for Children's of Alabama, and we are proud that our donations stay right here in Alabama. We will have the Buy Alabama's Best Day on the Lawn on March 22nd. Governor Kay Ivey and Agriculture Commissioner Rick Pate will both be in attendance. Please make plans to attend as we showcase our state's great products.

The 2023 Legislative Session began on March 7th. There are 31 new members in the 105 member Alabama House of Representatives and 6 new members in the 35 member Alabama State Senate. AGA will work hard educating these new members about the grocery industry and our role in the state with a \$12 billion economic impact and providing over half a million jobs. The good news is, despite being infiltrated

with a pandemic, Alabama has prevailed economically. In fact, there is a \$2.7 billion overage in the Education Trust Fund. Lawmakers are now in the process of deciding how to distribute these funds back to the people of Alabama. The ideas being circulated right now include rebates for taxpayers, modest tax cuts, one-time investments in education and a change in the way Alabama funds K-12 education. We will continue to work on our four top legislative priorities this year which include ready to drink legislation for low-abv spirit beverages, the Organized Retail Crime Bill, which will create specialized felony levels related to shoplifting, updates to the grocery curbside delivery legislation, and the removal of the 4% state tax on groceries.

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February 22nd is Supermarket Employee Day. What a great way to celebrate employees at every level for the work they do to feed families and enrich lives. Supermarket employees provide Alabamians with access to safe, healthy, and affordable food as well as providing countless volunteer hours in their communities. Governor Kay Ivey has proclaimed February 22, 2023, Supermarket Employee Day in the state of Alabama. We loved seeing how each of you celebrated your employees on that special day!

Please do not forget about our upcoming events, the AGEF Golf Outing on April 13th at Inverness Country Club and our Annual Convention on July 9-12 at the Sandestin Beach Resort in Destin, Florida. The AGEF supports our annual scholarship program and tuition reimbursement that helps alleviate the rising costs of education. To date, our Foundation has awarded over \$1.4 million in scholarships. Our Annual Convention cultivates community within the grocery industry through networking experiences, educational seminars, and

showcasing at our exhibit hall while enjoying entertainment at a top-notch venue. All of these events are critical to the success of our Association.

Best wishes to all of you for a successful, profitable, and healthy 2023!

Best Regards,

Ellie





ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2023 SESSION PREVIEW



Patrick McWhorter
Legislative Consultant
The McWhorter Group

THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE GATHERED MARCH 7TH TO CONVENE THE 2023 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION

There are 31 (30%) new members in the House out of 105, one of the largest turnovers in recent memory. Republican members remain a super majority in both Houses. Rep. Nathaniel Ledbetter (DeKalb County) was officially elected Speaker, Rep. Scott Stadthagen (Morgan County) House Majority Leader, and Rep. Chris Pringle (Mobile County) Speaker Pro Tem, in the Organizational Session in January. House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels (Madison County) will continue as Minority Leader. Governor Kay Ivey began her second full term in January, which, by Constitution, will be her last.

With so many new members and new leadership, along with a number of new committee chairs, it will be interesting to see how quickly the House settles down to do the work of the people who elected them.

There are 6 (17%) new members in the Senate out of 35. Senate President Pro Tem Greg Reed (Walker County), Majority Leader Clay Scofield (Marshall County), and Minority Leader Bobby Singleton (Greene County) were all re-elected to their positions for this term. New committee chairs include: Sen. Will Barfoot (Montgomery County) as Judiciary Chair, Sen. Randy Price (Lee County) as Chair of Tourism and Marketing, Sen. David Sessions (Mobile County) as Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Chair, Sen. Garlan Gudger (Cullman County) Chair of FRED (Fiscal Responsibility & Economic Development), and Sen. Chris Elliott

(Baldwin County) will Chair a new Local Government Committee.

Your AGA representatives have been given an aggressive agenda by our legislative committee for 2023. Our top legislative priorities include allowing the sale of Ready to Drink (RTD) products containing distilled spirits in our stores, Organized Retail Theft, alcohol curbside updates, and the removal of the state sales tax on groceries.

For RTD, we have a strong retail coalition with the Petroleum Marketers of Alabama and the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association as well as other AGA members. We are also working the new ABC Administrator, Curtis Stewart, on their priorities. There is still a dispute over the inclusion of franchise protection language, which we hope will be worked out so as not to endanger our opportunity to grow our business in a substantial way.

With the assistance of Counsel Paul DeMarco, we have drafted new retail theft legislation to complement last year's passage of the Online Transparency Act. The Alabama District Attorneys Association is also apparently working toward the same end, and we hope to work closely with them. We presently have no law specific to shoplifting in Alabama. Crimes must be prosecuted under the regular theft statutes.

And to correct a mistake in the final passage of a bill to allow convenience stores to sell adult beverages via a drive

through window, we will have a bill introduced to bring our ability to provide these beverages through curbside delivery in the same amounts as home delivery.

Money will be the primary topic of conversation for the session. There are continuing rumors that Governor Ivey will call a special session within the regular session to appropriate \$1.1 billion in Federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds received, along with bills dealing with the renewal of the state's economic development incentives. Nothing firm is known as of this writing. With huge surpluses in both the General and Education Budgets, everyone is naturally clamoring for more money. A number of Republicans are talking tax rebates. House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels (Madison County) has offered a novel approach to cease withholding taxes on overtime pay in this labor shortage, encouraging employees to be more willing to work more hours. In an interview, Sen. Greg Reed said, "I think on priorities for our ARPA (will be) water/sewer, broadband, medical topics (such as) hospitals, nursing homes (and) issues that are going to be important in individual communities related to things that are approved that supports families (and) senior adults, those kinds of things ... As far as priorities for the general fund budget, I think (funding) mental health (resources will be a priority).

Continued on page 9

There's (also) going to be an additional request for Medicaid funding just because some things are changing post-Covid in Medicaid in particular." In hearings earlier this month, the Education Department is asked for almost \$1 billion in new funding.

Sen. Arthur Orr (Morgan County), Chair of the Senate Finance & Tax Education Fund, gave hope in an interview February 28th that we may have the chance to finally repeal the state's portion of sales tax on groceries. That would save our

customers in the state over \$500 million per year. But, most of that money would have to be made up in other ways to keep the Education Fund secure. Orr said, "There are some heavy lifts that, if we can get the votes, I think you could see related to the grocery tax, I think reducing the income tax rates," Orr continued. "There is a possibility there that we could maybe get something accomplished. A lot will be moving around, certainly, with the budgets in that regard." We are working closely with Alabama Arise and other interested

groups to accomplish that longtime goal. With AGA's strong support, we came within 1 vote succeeding in 2010.

As always, we will begin our weekly legislative updates in the Market Minute. We encourage you to take a few minutes each Tuesday to look over the issues and let us know your opinions. Our past legislative success is due to the strong local support of our members! Call or email if you have questions: 334.221.0220 or patrick@themcwhortergroup.com.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

ASSOCIATION NEWS EXHIBIT HALL THEME

Annual Show
Bringing Grocers to the Table

BEACH PARTY

JULY 9-12 2023
SANDESTIN GOLF & BEACH RESORT



The Alabama Grocers Association Annual Show is excited to bring back our Best Decorated Booth Competition paired with our Exhibit Hall Theme.

This year's Exhibit Hall Theme will be Beach Party! Get ready to have some fun while showcasing your company's products and/or services.

To secure your spot at this year's exhibit hall, visit <https://alabamagrocers.org/convention/exhibitor-form/>.

For more information, email scrabtree@alabamagrocers.org

We hope you will join us at our Convention on July 9th-12th, 2023. It's going to be a GREAT ONE!

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China Doll Rice	Lipari Foods	Stratus Group
Columbia Southern University	Misty Mountain Spring Water	Super Foods Supermarkets Hdq.
DCR Profit Control Systems	Mrs. Stratton's Salads	Tampico
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Estes Foods, Inc.	Pictsweet	Wells Enterprises, Inc.
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2023 Alabama Senate Committee Assignments

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Gerald Allen	Arthur Orr
Clyde Chambliss	Dan Roberts
Vivian Figures (Ranking Minority Member)	David Sessions
Sam Givhan	Rodger Smitherman
Andrew Jones	April Weaver
Steve Linvingston	

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Gerald Allen (Vice Chair)	Tim Melson
Greg Albritton	Dan Roberts
Tom Butler	Clay Scofield
Donnie Chesteen	David Sessions
Vivian Figures	Bobby Singleton
Garlan Gudger	Rodger Smitherman (Ranking Minority Member)
Kirk Hatcher	Jabo Waggoner

Finance & Taxation General Fund

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Billy Beasley	Arthur Orr
Merika Coleman	Randy Price
Chris Elliott	Shay Shelnett
Sam Givhan	Robert Stewart
Andrew Jones	Larry Stutts
Keith Kelley	April Weaver

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Jabo Waggoner (Vice Chair)	Randy Price
Gerald Allen	David Sessions
Clyde Chambliss	Shay Shelnett
Vivian Figures	Larry Stutts
Sam Givhan	Bobby Singleton
Garlan Gudger	Rodger Smitherman (Ranking Minority Member)
Kirk Hatcher	Jack Williams

2023 Alabama Senate Committee Assignments

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Will Barfoot (Chair)

Sam Givhan (Vice Chair)

Greg Albritton

Lance Bell

Josh Carnley

Chris Elliott

Vivian Figures

Linda Coleman-Madison

Arthur Orr

Bobby Singleton

Rodger Smitherman (Ranking Minority Member)

Larry Stutts

April Weaver

Governmental Affairs - Local

Chris Elliott (Chair)

Clyde Chambliss (Vice Chair)

Greg Albritton

Josh Carnley

Merika Coleman

Garlan Gudger

Kirk Hatcher

Jay Hovey

Keith Kelley

Linda Coleman-Madison (Ranking Minority Member)

Governmental Affairs - State

Tom Butler (Chair)

Chris Elliott (Vice Chair)

Greg Albritton

Gerald Allen

Lance Bell

Merika Coleman

Keith Kelley

Linda Coleman-Madison (Ranking Minority Member)

Arthur Orr

Dan Roberts

Robert Stewart

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Shay Shelnuttt (Vice Chair)

Tom Butler

Vivian Figures

Garlan Gudger

Kirk Hatcher

Jay Hovey

Randy Price

Rodger Smitherman (Ranking Minority Member)

Larry Stutts

Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry

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Jack Williams (Vice Chair)

Will Barfoot

Billy Beasley

Josh Carnley

Donnie Chesteen

Andrew Jones

Steve Livingston

Tim Melson

Randy Price

Clay Scofield

Bobby Singleton (Ranking Minority Member)

Robert Stewart

Larry Stutts

2023 Alabama Senate Committee Assignments

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Will Barfoot	Randy Price
Josh Carnley	Dan Roberts
Merika Coleman	Clay Scofield
Chris Elliott	Bobby Singleton
Kirk Hatcher	Rodger Smitherman (Ranking Minority Member)
Jay Hovey	Jabo Waggoner

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Greg Albritton	David Sessions
Will Barfoot	Robert Stewart
Billy Beasley (Ranking Minority Member)	April Weaver
Merika Coleman	Jack Williams
Jay Hovey	

Fiscal Responsibility & Economic Development

Garlan Gudger (Chair)	Sam Givhan
April Weaver (Vice Chair)	Kirk Hatcher
Tom Butler	Jay Hovey
Josh Carnely	Keith Kelley
Donnie Chesteen	Tim Melson
Merika Coleman	Dan Roberts
Vivian Figures (Ranking Minority Member)	David Sessions

Healthcare

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Billy Beasley	Shay Shelnett
Lance Bell	Robert Stewart
Tom Butler	April Weaver
Donnie Chesteen	Jack Williams
Sam Givhan	

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Dan Roberts (Vice Chair)	Keith Kelley
Gerald Allen	Linda Coleman-Madison
Lance Bell	Robert Stewart
Clyde Chambliss	Jack Williams

2023 Alabama Senate Committee Assignments

Tourism

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Andrew Jones (Vice Chair)

Greg Albritton

Billy Beasley

Lance Bell

Chris Elliott

Garlan Gudger

Steve Livingston

David Sessions

Bobby Singleton

Rodger Smitherman (Ranking Minority Member)

Robert Stewart

Veterans, Military Affairs & Public Safety

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Donnie Chesteen (Vice Chair)

Will Barfoot

Billy Beasley (Ranking Minority Member)

Lance Bell

Josh Carnley

Sam Givhan

Kirk Hatcher

Keith Kelley

Local Legislation

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Clay Scofield (Vice Chair)

Greg Reed

2023 Alabama House of Representatives Committee Assignments

Rules

Joe Lovvorn (Chair)	Matt Woods
David Faulkner (Vice Chair)	Cynthia Almond
Barbara Boyd (Ranking Minority Member)	Scott Stadthagen
Shane Stringer	Jeff Sorrells
Anthony Daniels	Wes Kitchens
Kyle South	Pebblin Warren
Chris Pringle	Randy Wood
Adline Clarke	

Ways & Means Education Trust Fund

Danny Garrett (Chair)	Kelvin Lawrence
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Barbara Drummond (Ranking Minority Member)	Cynthia Almond
Alan Baker	Debbie Wood
Prince Chestnut	Troy Stubbs
Terri Collins	Brock Colvin
Anthony Daniels	David Faulkner
Corley Ellis	

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Napoleon Bracy	Chris Blackshear
Jeff Sorrells	Chris Sells
Brett Easterbrook	Pebblin Warren
Andy Whitt	Bill Lamb
Wes Kitchens	

Judiciary

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Russell Bedsole	Patrice McClammy
Cynthia Almond	Phillip Pettus
Prince Chestnut	Ben Robbins
Ontario Tillman	Matt Simpson
Shane Stringer	

2023 Alabama House of Representatives Committee Assignments

Health

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Craig Lipscomb (Vice Chair)
Laura Hall (Ranking Minority Member)
Jeremy Gray
Wes Kitchens
David Cole
Phillip Rigsby
Rhett Marques

Frances Holk-Jones
Arnold Mooney
Neil Rafferty
Susan DuBose
Jeff Sorrells
Mark Shirey
Pebblin Warren

State Government

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Russell Bedsole (Vice Chair)
John Rogers (Ranking Minority Member)
Mike Kirkland
Ernie Yarbrough
Mike Shaw
Barbara Boyd
Prince Chestnut

Jamie Kiel
Kelvin Lawrence
Scott Stadthagen
Mack Butler
Randy Wood
Marcus Paramore
David Cole

Agriculture & Forestry

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Steve Hurst (Vice Chair)
Thomas Jackson (Ranking Minority Member)
Brett Easterbrook
David Standridge
Bob Fincher
Napoleon Bracy
Matthew Hammett

Curtis Travis
Reed Ingram
A.J. McCampbell
Ed Oliver
Ron Bolton
Jeff Sorrells
Van Smith

Transportation, Utilities, & Infrastructure

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Van Smith (Vice Chair)
A.J. McCampbell (Ranking Minority Member)
Napoleon Bracy
Danny Crawford
Brett Easterbrook
Donna Givens
Mike Kirkland

Rolanda Hollis
Wes Kitchens
Parker Moore
Curtis Travis
Rhett Marques
Leigh Hulse
Margie Wilcox

2023 Alabama House of Representatives Committee Assignments

Public Safety & Homeland Security

Allen Treadaway (Chair)	Tashina Morris
Shane Stringer (Vice Chair)	Phillip Pettus
Thomas Jackson (Ranking Minority Member)	Ron Bolton
Russell Bedsole	Corey Harbison
Chris England	Jennifer Fidler
Tracy Estes	Tim Wadsworth
Jeremy Gray	Ginny Shaver
Jerry Starnes	

Education Policy

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Alan Baker (Vice Chair)	Bob Fincher
Barbara Drummond (Ranking Minority Member)	Kenneth Paschal
Jeremy Gray	Tashina Morris
Anthony Daniels	Van Smith
Matt Woods	Mark Gidley
Susan DuBose	Frances Holk-Jones
Marcus Paramore	

Ports, Waterways & Intermodal Transit

Chip Brown (Chair)	Matt Simpson
Craig Lipscomb (Vice Chair)	Leigh Hulsey
Adline Clarke (Ranking Minority Member)	Rhett Marques
Mike Kirkland	Terri Collins
Kenyatte Hassell	Rolanda Hollis
James Lomax	Curtis Travis
Donna Givens	Jamie Kiel
Shane Stringer	

Financial Services

Chris Blackshear (Chair)	Marcus Paramore
Andy Whitt (Vice Chair)	Jeff Sorrells
John Rogers (Ranking Minority Member)	Kerry Underwood
Ontario Tillman	David Standridge
Steve Clouse	Mike Shaw
Phillip Ensler	Kyle South
Patrice McClammy	

2023 Alabama House of Representatives Committee Assignments

Military & Veterans Affairs

Ed Oliver (Chair)	Ben Harrison
Kenneth Paschal (Vice Chair)	Phillip Pettus
Sam Jones (Ranking Minority Member)	Allen Treadaway
Mark Gidley	Randy Wood
Kenyatte Hassell	Chad Robertson
Fred Plump	Jerry Starnes
Patrice McClammy	

Ethics & Campaign Finance

Matt Simpson (Chair)	Ron Bolton
Cynthia Almond (Vice Chair)	Leigh Hulsey
Thomas Jackson (Ranking Minority Member)	Mike Shaw
James Lomax	Chris England
Berry Forte	Matt Woods
Curtis Travis	Corey Harbison
Ritchie Whorton	

Commerce & Small Business

Jim Carns (Chair)	Troy Stubbs
Rhett Marques (Vice Chair)	Mark Shirey
Berry Forte (Ranking Minority Member)	Phillip Ensler
Patrick Sellers	Brock Colvin
Adline Clarke	Ritchie Whorton
Phillip Rigsby	Mark Gidley

Constitution, Campaigns & Elections

Bob Fincher (Chair)	James Lomax
Arnold Mooney (Vice Chair)	Kenneth Paschal
Juandalyn Givan (Ranking Minority Member)	Chris Pringle
Adline Clarke	Chad Robertson
Mark Shirey	Ben Harrison
Kenyatte Hassell	Mack Butler

County & Municipal Government

Reed Ingram (Chair)	Steve Hurst
Debbie Wood (Vice Chair)	Sam Jones
Barbara Boyd (Ranking Minority Member)	Matthew Hammett
Jennifer Fidler	Troy Stubbs
Adline Clarke	Kerry Underwood
Danny Crawford	Ben Harrison

2023 Alabama House of Representatives Committee Assignments

Board, Agencies & Commissions

Margie Wilcox (Chair)	Steve Hurst
Ben Robbins (Vice Chair)	Parker Moore
John Rogers (Ranking Minority Member)	Mack Butler
Donna Givens	Kerry Underwood
Bill Lamb	Kelvin Lawrence
Napoleon Bracy	

Fiscal Responsibility

Phillip Pettus (Chair)	Fred Plump
Parker Moore (Vice Chair)	David Cole
Juandalyn Givan (Ranking Minority Member)	Marcus Paramore
Ontario Tillman	Susan DuBose
Scott Stadthagen	Ben Harrison
Corley Ellis	Bill Lamb

Economic Development & Tourism

Andy Whitt (Chair)	Tashina Morris
Ginny Shaver (Vice Chair)	Frances Holk-Jones
Rolanda Hollis (Ranking Minority Member)	Neil Rafferty
Allen Treadaway	Chad Robertson
Chip Brown	Steve Clouse
Corey Harbison	

Urban & Rural Development

David Standridge (Chair)	Mary Moore
Ritchie Whorton (Vice Chair)	Matt Woods
Prince Chestnut (Ranking Minority Member)	Matthew Hammett
Jennifer Fidler	Debbie Wood
Kerry Underwood	Rick Rehm
Sam Jones	

Insurance

Corley Ellis (Chair)	Chris Blackshear
Brett Easterbrook (Vice Chair)	David Faulkner
A.J. McCampbell (Ranking Minority Member)	Jamie Kiel
Patrick Sellers	Brock Colvin
Chip Brown	Kyle South
Phillip Ensler	

2023 Alabama House of Representatives Committee Assignments

Children & Senior Advocacy

Ginny Shaver (Chair)	Randall Shedd
Tracy Estes (Vice Chair)	Ernie Yarbrough
Barbara Boyd (Ranking Minority Member)	Mary Moore
Jim Carns	Rick Rehm
Barbara Drummond	Tim Wadsworth

Local Legislation

Alan Baker (Chair)	Craig Lipscomb
Ritchie Whorton (Vice Chair)	Randall Shedd
Thomas Jackson (Ranking Minority Member)	Donna Givens
Patrick Sellers	Steve Clouse
Kerry Underwood	Matt Woods
Bob Fincher	Tim Wadsworth
Phillip Ensler	Jennifer Fidler
Kelvin Lawrence	



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INDUSTRY NEWS

SIMPLIFYING HIGH TECH COMPLEXITY



Michael Sansolo
Retail Food Industry Consultant

WHEN IT COMES TO TECHNOLOGY, ANY OF YOU WOULD BE FORGIVEN FOR FEELING MORE THAN A LITTLE OVERWHELMED

We hear talk about bits and bytes, about download speeds and endlessly evolving social media. And now, of course, we're bombarded with stories about artificial intelligence and sites like Chat GPT.

Honestly, you are totally correct to wonder what is all this stuff and why does it matter to making and selling the products in a modern supermarket. But increasingly, the world of technology and the world of food retail are intertwined, and like it or not, we all need to be more technology aware than ever.

This past February I was part of a technology summit built into the National Grocers Association Convention in Las Vegas, and as many of the retailers in attendance made clear that understanding all that information was like trying to drink from a fire hydrant. When it comes to technology it's always too much and too fast for anyone to absorb.

So let's focus on this vastly important topic in a different and hopefully more helpful way. Whenever you are approached with a technological solution ask some basic questions:

1. Will this increase my sales?
2. Will this cut my costs and make my operation more efficient?
3. Will this delight my customers and increase their loyalty to my store or products or services?

With that as our filter, let's consider some of the topics we discussed at NGA and see how they match up.

We spent a lot of time talking about data-driven marketing, most commonly used through frequent shopper programs. As many speakers pointed out, the key to data-driven marketing is the feedback any retailer can get from the marketing activities you employ. In contrast, when you feature a product in a print circular, it may or may not drive up sales, but for the most part you have no way of knowing what did or did not work.

In contrast, data-driven marketing, where you focus in on specific customers based on their shopping patterns, can give you quantifiable insights on exactly how your efforts worked. As one retailer explained in the sessions, his company finds that every dollar they spend on data-driven targeted marketing brings back \$12 in incremental sales. That's a gain that's hard to dispute.

Likewise, thanks to the pandemic, many retailers had to rush headlong into electronic commerce by offering internet-based ordering and either delivery or curbside collect services. Another panelist explained that these efforts produced incremental sales gains for those who jumped in, meaning if you avoided the entire situation you likely lost sales to competitors.

In addition, we all need to face the reality that today's younger shoppers are more technologically focused than ever. They don't read newspapers so they don't see circulars or print ads, and they love on-line shopping. And their older siblings, parents and grandparents are making the very same changes.

And not to overload you with realities, but there are significant changes coming shortly that require you to change how you track deliveries (for food safety reasons) or even clear digital coupons. These are topics you simply cannot avoid just because they are complex as there are real world penalties and potentially lost sales involved.

Continued on page 23

Possibly the most important question raised throughout the technology summit was simply how companies - no matter their size - get started. The easiest answer is you must work with partners either wholesalers, fellow retailers and certainly technology service providers, whose expertise is essential.

The bottom line is that thanks to the pandemic and the onslaught of technological advancement, you have

to look at ways to utilize technology to make your company competitive and relevant in a very fast changing world.

Just remember that you are never employing technology simply for the sake of it being cool or current. Just as with everything you do, this requires business decisions and clear priorities. Always ask for the business realities of whatever technology you are hoping to employ - how it raises sales, lowers costs

or makes you more competitive - before jumping in. And find allies who might have experiences to help guide you.

Most importantly, remember that this is the world we live in today. Certainly you can ignore all these new technologies and new ways to connect and communicate with your customers.

But you likely won't last long with that attitude.



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ASSOCIATION NEWS

BUY ALABAMA'S BEST RETAILER LUNCHEON

We had a wonderful time celebrating our 2022 Buy Alabama's Best program and highlighting what is in store for 2023. Thank you to everyone that attended our Luncheon!





ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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INDUSTRY NEWS

2022 COMING TO A CLOSE



Paul DeMarco
Alabama Grocers Association Partner
Parsons, Lee & Juliano, PC

SIGNS OF GOOD DAYS AHEAD FOR ALABAMA IN 2023

With 2022 in the rear view mirror, Alabama is another year away from the initial days of the pandemic that has caused much suffering for so many.

Yet, state residents continue to deal with economic woes created largely by wayward policies from Washington, D.C. that have effected the pocketbooks and wallets of most everyone.

Alabama has also seen the same spike in violent crime as the rest of the Nation and this past year was one of the worst in state history. The city of Birmingham alone is close to breaking an all time high for homicides that dates back 90 years.

But with a new year ahead, there is hope that our state will see better days.

There are signs of financial good news for the state in the next year that will carry over from 2022. This past year the state was recognized for its workforce development, landing top manufacturing facilities and being ranked as a top state to conduct business. Alabama has continued to attract new manufacturing plants and existing ones are expanding. There are more recruiting projects on the table that will bring good paying jobs and contribute overall to the state economy.

The state maintained low unemployment rates throughout the year and there is no reason to believe that will not continue in 2023. This past fall Alabama businesses employed more workers than at any time in state history. A further positive sign is that wages and salaries continued to rise at record amounts.

One of the reasons for the strong business climate is the investment in infrastructure. The Port of Mobile was the busiest in history for the state's front door to shipping with record growth. In addition, with millions of dollars of construction to expand the port's facilities, you can expect even more products moving through the Alabama Port Authority Terminals in the coming months.

And in North Alabama, this is the year that the state has been waiting for with the hope of an official announcement that the United States Space Command will relocate to Huntsville. A final decision is pending and should come early in 2023. The move from Colorado to Alabama would be another major addition to the strong military installations in our state.

Finally, tourists continue to make Alabama a destination at record numbers and state agriculture products continue to be the backbone of the state economy.

It has been a long three years, but Alabama and its residents see signs of better days ahead.

Paul DeMarco is a former member of the Alabama House of Representatives and can be found on Twitter at [@Paul_DeMarco](#)

Paul DeMarco is a partner at the law firm of Parsons, Lee & Juliano, PC and is the general counsel for the Alabama Grocers Association.

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ADVOCATING FOR SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES



Jennifer Hatcher

Chief Public Policy Officer & Senior Vice President
Food Marketing Institute

FOOD INDUSTRY POLICY PRIORITIES TAKE SHAPE FOR 2023

With the 118th Congressional legislative session getting underway, FMI is advocating for significant policy outcomes this year in support of our membership. In January at FMI's Midwinter Executive Conference in Orlando, our Board of Directors met to discuss their key policy priorities for 2023. We asked the Board to rank 12 different issues and identify those that they felt were the most important for FMI advocacy. It was a great exercise that resulted in the Board coalescing around five top issues that they see as critical to address in order to best position the industry for success in 2023 and beyond. These include:

Labor – Workforce Supply and Regulatory Enforcement: The food industry continues to face a significant workforce shortage, despite efforts to increase wages and benefits and provide flexible work schedules. Food retailers and product suppliers continue to strive for creative solutions to enable the industry to attract and retain talent and further invest in their employees. Additionally, the current labor and employment regulatory environment is inflexible and burdensome for employers and threatens to significantly hamper the food industry's ability to grow its workforce. FMI will advocate in this area for more flexible rules that can enhance our labor participation.

Food Safety – Traceability: Nothing is more important to FMI and our members than food safety. Issued in November 2022, the Food Traceability rule was one of the last remaining regulations required under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Unfortunately, the rule complexity and scope deviates significantly from a law designed to focus on tracing high-risk foods, not tens of thousands of products. FMI will be outlining to Congress and FDA the flexibilities and changes needed in order for companies to even begin to be able to develop compliance strategies for the rule.

Payments – Swipe Fee Reform: Credit Card Competition: Grocery merchants and our customers have had to shoulder skyrocketing costs associated with credit card purchases for decades but pandemic changes took these to a new level of impact. FMI will push for reform of the broken credit card market to foster competition and bring financial relief to consumers and main street businesses during these challenging economic times. FMI will work for reintroduction and passage of bipartisan, bicameral legislation this year.

Pharmacy – PBM Reform: Due to the anticompetitive practices of many pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs),

it is a struggle to keep supermarket pharmacies in business – particularly in underserved, low-income, rural, and urban neighborhoods. Patients, physicians, and employers that provide health care coverage share our deep concerns. Increased PBM oversight and transparency reform are necessary to reduce drug costs and preserve access to supermarket pharmacies. FMI is pushing for legislative and regulatory solutions both federally and in the states.

Economy – Inflation: A number of factors continue to negatively impact the food supply chain and contribute to elevated food prices, including the remnants of the COVID-19 pandemic, severe weather events, labor shortages, and global conflict. Policies that address these root causes are needed to bring food price inflation down and provide relief to American families. We are communicating in the media and with legislators every time CPI is released.

Continued on page 27

Of course, this list of priorities isn't exhaustive. Other critical policy areas in which FMI and our members are engaged include reauthorization of the Farm Bill, strengthening federal nutrition assistance programs, addressing ongoing supply chains challenges, improving sustainable packaging and

recycling, reducing food waste, and ensuring safe shopping experiences for customers in communities across the country.

As the 118th Congress begins its work in earnest, we see plenty of opportunities on the horizon to engage policymakers

and regulators in developing solutions that address the biggest challenges our industry faces. FMI looks forward to working with Congress in a bipartisan manner to ensure our members continue to be able to fulfill their mission to feed families and enrich lives.



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ASSOCIATION NEWS

2023 INAUGURAL EVENTS

The Alabama Grocers Association enjoyed hosting the Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture & Industries Inaugural Open House. Thank you to all of the Buy Alabama's Best companies for contributing your Alabama products. Congratulations, Commissioner Pate!



Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED



Conecuh Sausage



Flowers Baking Company



Milo's



Blue Bell Creameries



Bud's Best Cookies



UTZ/Golden Flake



Mrs. Stratton's Salads



Red Diamond



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INDUSTRY NEWS

PREDICTION IS DIFFICULT



Greg Ferrara
President & CEO
National Grocers Association

THE FUTURE OF YOUR BUSINESS IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT

Mark Twain couldn't have been more correct when he said, "Prediction is difficult, particularly when it involves the future."

I'm sure that holds true for anyone trying to figure out how the year is going to pan out for grocery operators. Who could have predicted a global pandemic, war in eastern Europe and runaway inflation, all in a span of less than three years?

That's why trying to predict what's going to happen in the next 12 months is a shaky limb to sit on. Still, independent grocers historically do a good job preparing for feast or famine and pivoting as needed to best serve their communities.

At this writing, just a few weeks into the first quarter of 2023, the tough marketplace conditions of the past year persist. Inflation continues to impact food the hardest among all the consumer categories, though some are starting to see some relief. Gas prices that appeared to inch their way down around Christmas started to reverse course. And uncertainty about the nation's egg supply reached a fever pitch when the impact of last year's avian flu outbreak collided with the annual holiday spike in baking, resulting in price surges and shortages.

Even so, the egg market was expected to gradually normalize as the new year transpired. More good news at the end of 2022 came from the USDA, which reported that food prices are expected to grow more slowly this year than last, between 3% and 4%.

There's even better news for supermarket operators: Food-at-home prices are expected to increase 2.5% to 3.5%, compared to food away from home, for which a jump of 4% to 5% is anticipated, according to the USDA. This confirms what we've always known, that grocery stores deliver more options and value than restaurants, especially in uneasy economic times.

Independent grocers are helping consumers maximize their value and continue to scour the marketplace for the best deals, despite inevitable price increases and pressure on historically low margins.

These pressures amplify the need for enforcement of antitrust laws, which continues to be a top NGA priority and heads the list of our ongoing advocacy activity in 2023.

In mid-January, NGA's Government Relations Committee met in Washington, D.C., to discuss top policy priorities for independent community grocers during the 118th Congress,

which finally started to do business after a historic, protracted effort to elect a new Speaker of the House.

The committee covered a variety of topics important to the independent grocery industry, including decreasing credit card swipe fees, DIR fee reform, labor and employment, and the 2023 Farm Bill, as well as antitrust reform.

Independent grocers are important to Alabama's economy. The state's 434 independently owned and operated supermarkets account for \$3.3 billion in total economic impact and provide for more than 27,000 jobs, directly or indirectly to the grocery industry, surpassing \$1 billion in total wages.

That's why it's important for Alabama's independent operators, along with their peers across the United States, to be on equal footing with their much larger chain competitors in the grocery industry.

Continued on page 29

You can join other independent retailers, wholesalers and state association executives on June 6-7, 2023, in Washington, D.C., for NGA's Fly-In for Fair Competition, to advocate for a level playing field in the grocery industry by calling for enforcement of the Robinson-Patman Act. It's an opportunity to meet with your representatives on Capitol Hill, discuss the issues most important to your business, and impact the

policymaking process.

You'll have scheduled Congressional meetings, along with other NGA members and experienced advocates, and you'll have opportunities outside of those meetings to interact with lawmakers and their staffs.

In the words of Abraham Lincoln, the most reliable way to predict the future

is to create it. As a member of NGA participating in the Fly-In for Fair Competition, you'll be helping to create a better future for your business and your community.

For more information about the fly-in, visit <https://www.nationalgrocers.org/m/flyin/>.



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AGEF GOLF OUTING



Our Alabama Grocers Education Foundation Annual Golf Outing is right around the corner! Join us on April 13th at Inverness Country Club in Birmingham. All proceeds from this event will go to AGEF's scholarship fund. This is a great opportunity to support our foundation while networking with key contacts in the grocery industry.

For more information, visit <https://alabamagrocers.org/foundation/agef-golf-outing/> or email scrabtree@alabamagrocers.org



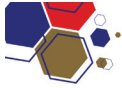


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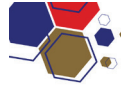
2023 RETAILER, WHOLESALER & VENDOR OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to Gerry D'Alessandro, CEO of Fresh Value, on winning our 2023 Retailer of the Year Award; Jeff Brown, Director of Retail Operations at Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Company, on winning our 2023 Wholesaler of the Year Award; and Mike Hanson, Director of Key Accounts for Milo's, on winning our 2023 Vendor of the Year Award! We are very excited to honor these well-deserving men at our 2023 Food Industry Finest Event on October 26, 2023. Please make plans to join us at The Club in Birmingham. We hope to see you there!



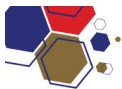
2023 RETAILER OF THE YEAR

Gerry D'Alessandro
Fresh Value
CEO



2023 WHOLESALER OF THE YEAR

Jeff Brown
Piggly Wiggly Alabama
Distributing Co.
Director of Retail Operations



2023 VENDOR OF THE YEAR

Mike Hanson
Milo's
Director of Key Accounts




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INDUSTRY
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LUNCHEON**



**OCTOBER 26, 2023
THE CLUB**



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MARCH IS BUY ALABAMA'S BEST MONTH!



BUY ALABAMA'S BEST DAY ON THE LAWN MARCH 22, 2023



DAY ON THE LAWN

Please make plans to join us at Buy Alabama's Best Day on the Lawn on March 22, 2023, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. on the Capitol Lawn in Montgomery. The press conference will be from 11-11:15 a.m. followed by the sampling event ending at 1 p.m. Governor Kay Ivey and Agriculture Commissioner Rick Pate are scheduled to attend. Executive Officers, Legislators and their staff members will be invited to join as well. We hope to see you there!



PRODUCT PURCHASING CONTEST

Retailers, our Product Purchasing Contest is almost over! Retailers that purchase at least one case from at least 75% of the Alabama Food Manufacturers and Producers Association companies will be entered into a \$2,000 drawing. Products should be purchased between February 1st and March 15th for the March promotion. Entries must be submitted by April 15th. We will draw for the winner of the March promotion at the BAB Fall Event.



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AGA NEW MEMBERS



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UPCOMING EVENTS

ALABAMA GROCERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION GOLF OUTING

APRIL 13, 2023
INVERNESS COUNTRY CLUB



SAVE THE DATE

2023 AGA CONVENTION

JULY 9-12, 2023

JULY						
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AGEF CLAY SHOOT

10.12.23

FOOD INDUSTRY FINEST LUNCHEON



OCTOBER 26, 2023

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Vice President Of Sales
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