

Alabama Grocer

2023, ISSUE 2

Alabama Grocers Association

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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A FINAL FAREWELL



Harold Garrett
President
Gateway Foods

HARD WORK PAYS OFF!

Hello again! I want to start this message with how appreciative I am of all of the hard work, pride and dedication that our association staff shows in their everyday routine. When it comes to our special events, these ladies really give an above and beyond effort to make sure that everything the Alabama Grocers Association does is a great reflection of its membership. I am proud to belong to such an association.

Since the last issue, I am extremely proud of our team as we have seen progress with a few things that we have been working on in the State Legislature. The first being an organized retail theft bill, that would help protect our stores from the bad guys that want to band together and loot the stores with very little recourse, or fear of incarceration. While we did not see the passing of the RTD bill, we still have hope that these beverages can be on our shelves in the future. We are super excited about the third item as the state sales tax bill. I really feel that this will give families of our state a little extra help at the grocery store cash register.

I know that Ellie and Pat will continue their efforts on all these bills. The AGA is in good hands!

Also, it is the time of year when we stop to award our AGEF Scholarships, a program of which I am very proud. It is very rewarding to see hard working students earn a little extra funding to continue their education. A few years ago, we implemented a continuing education program for industry employees to go back to school or take classes that will help them grow in our industry, there has been an increasing interest in this side of the scholarship program and numbers are growing. It is very rewarding to see how many of our company employees earn AGA scholarships each year. We encourage our student employees to fill out the application, and our company contributes to the cause by offering Piggyback Scholarships as an incentive.

I would now like to take a moment to let everyone know how much I have enjoyed working with the magazine, as outgoing Chairman, this will be my last opportunity to write my little article. I hope you have enjoyed my ramblings.

I wish you success in all your endeavors, and may God bless each of you.

Best Regards,
Harold

JOIN US FOR THE 2023 AGEF SILENT AUCTION



Follow the QR code to register for the AGEF Silent Auction. Your support to this event directly impacts our ability to fund our scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs for 2023 and helps our members and their families achieve their academic goals.

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Silent Auction



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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE OVER A DECADE OF DEDICATION



Ellie Smotherman Taylor
President/CEO
Alabama Grocers Association

ALABAMIANS TO FINALLY SEE GROCERY TAX RELIEF

After over a decade of hard work, the reduction in the grocery tax is finally a reality. Act 2023-554 passed the legislature on June 1, 2023. On September 1, 2023, the grocery tax rate shall be reduced to three percent. On September 1, 2024, the tax rate shall be reduced to two percent, if the average of the estimated growth in the total net receipts from all revenue sources to the Education Trust Fund (EFT) is at least three and one-half percent higher than the previous fiscal year. With Alabama's budgets experiencing record growth and the EFT revenue growing steadily over the last 9 years, it was time to act on reducing this tax.

AGA worked very hard on this legislation on your behalf. The original versions of the bill used the WIC definition, which we explained to legislators would be very difficult to navigate not only for consumers but also at the register. Currently only 618 stores in Alabama even accept WIC, as compared to the 4,875 stores that currently accept SNAP benefits. Food in this bill is defined by the same definition as used by the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Another very important element of this legislation is that as of June 1, 2023, the local tax on food will remain at the same levels and no additional county or municipal sales and use taxes may be

levied on food. Any county or municipal governing body may, by resolution or ordinance, reduce the general or retail sales tax rate on food for local sales and use taxes by 25 percent in any year in which the growth in the applicable municipal or county general fund exceeds two percent over the prior year. This ensures that the percentage reduction by the state cannot be superseded by any local tax.

Daily, grocers witness hardworking Alabamians unable to purchase the food that they need. Despite wages increasing significantly over the last several years, the rising cost of food has outpaced all other household expenses except transportation. Alabama is one of only three states in the nation that does not reduce the sales tax on food, and two of our bordering states, Florida, and Georgia, do not tax groceries.

This is a regressive tax, which disproportionately affects those with lower income. We know that states with the highest grocery tax rates also tend to be the states with the highest rate of food insecurity. According to the Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama is the fifth poorest state in the nation, with 17% of adults and 23% of children (1 out of 4) facing food insecurity, or lack of regular access to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life. For those with low income,

elderly or retired people with a fixed income, rent or mortgage and medicine are usually covered first, leaving little for the food budget and other, more flexible expenses. Alabama has the second highest rate of food insecurity for seniors at 12.8%, as reported by Feeding America.

The average family of four spends \$1,000 per month on food at minimum. Reducing the state's grocery tax by 2% is significant. It could mean the difference between families having to choose between their prescription co-pay and enough food to feed their family.

We commend the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth, Senator Andrew Jones, Representative Danny Garrett, and all state legislators for passing this important legislation. Hardworking Alabamians deserve this reduction in the sales tax on groceries. The phased out approach will ensure that the EFT will stay strong and create the opportunity to help ALL Alabamians. It will also ensure that no additional taxes will be levied on Alabamians in order to remove the grocery tax.

Best Regards,

Ellie



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE YEAR OF THE GROCER



Patrick McWhorter
Legislative Consultant
The McWhorter Group

2023 LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP REPORT

It truly has been the “Year of the Grocer” during this year’s legislative session. Work was completed June 8th, and Governor Ivey completed her review and action on June 16th. However, they may not be gone long. The US Supreme Court has ruled that congressional districts drawn by the Legislature do not conform to the Voting Rights Act. It has been sent back to the US District Court in Montgomery, and they have granted time for redrawing those districts. But it must be completed by July 21, 2023. So Governor Ivey will have to call a special session to resolve that issue in July. Rumors abound that an effort may be made during the special session on gambling. Stay tuned.

- **Grocery Sales Tax Repeal (HB 479 by Rep. Danny Garrett) - Act # 2023-554.** A top priority for AGA for many years, we have finally succeeded in persuading legislators to make a start at removing the state’s share of the grocery tax. Ellie will be sending out more detail on implementation shortly, but here are the highlights of the bill: effective September 1, 2023, the state’s share of sales tax will be reduced from 4% to 3%. As we insisted on, it will exempt all items on the SNAP federal benefit list, which should make it much easier for you to program. The tax would be cut to 2% in 2024, if receipts to the ETF grow by 3.5% year over year. The new law also freezes local sales taxes on SNAP-eligible food. Local governments could lower those taxes but would not be able to raise them over their current rates at the time of passage. A lot of people deserve credit for

this victory. The turning point was Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth taking leadership and ownership of this issue, and persuading all 35 Senators to sponsor the bill. Credit is also due to House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter, Senator Andrew Jones of Centre and Rep. Patrice McClammy of Montgomery, who have pushed the issue for several years, and Rep. Danny Garrett. This is the largest tax cut in the history of Alabama. It will save taxpayers \$300 million a year.

- **House Joint Resolution 243 by Rep. Patrice McClammy of Montgomery – Act # 2023-400.** Is also now law, creating the Joint Study Commission on Grocery Taxation made up of 11 members, one of which will be designated by the Alabama Grocers Association. So we will have a seat at the table as legislators and other leaders of our state study this partial elimination of the sales tax on food and evaluate its impact on households, the Education Trust Fund budget, revenue collection by counties and cities, community food banks and hunger and malnutrition. And it will look to complete the full repeal of the tax.
- **Organized Retail Theft and Theft by Shoplifting (SB 206 by Sen. Clyde Chambliss of Prattville) - Act # 2023-531.** Building upon the victory of our efforts in 2022 to pass online transparency, Sen. Chambliss and his partner in the House, Rep. Allen Treadaway shepherded through the process critical and sweeping

legislation creating the crime of organized retail theft and, for the first time, a shoplifting law in Alabama. This bill dovetails with the online law, making a complete process to arrest and prosecute those who are stealing merchandise from our stores. We worked closely with the Alabama District Attorneys Association and other business groups to get this done. The ADAA has pledged to put forth the effort to train at least one assistant DA and one law enforcement officer in each judicial district on this new law to ensure enforcement.

- **Tax Exempt Overtime Pay (HB 217 by House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels of Huntsville) - Act # 2023-421.** In a great display of bipartisanship, House Speaker Ledbetter co-sponsored this new law, which could be huge in persuading employees to work overtime in this labor shortage. Basically all overtime pay is now exempt from withholding state income tax on overtime pay for full time employees. The Senate amended the bill to cap it at \$25 million, which would have been a nightmare to enforce, but in her wisdom, the Governor amended the bill, and the legislature approved, to say the exemption will expire at the end of 2025 if the legislature does not extend it. We will be working to make sure they do.
- **Curbside Delivery Bill (HB 166 by Rep. Parker Moore of Hartselle) - Act # 2023-287.** No less important, this new law corrects

a snafu created by a last-minute change on a separate issue the last day of the 2022 session. Working closely with the ABC staff, the limits for curbside delivery are now 1 case per wine and/or 4 cases of beer within a 24-hour period.

- **Dram Shop Liability Reform (SB 104 by Sen. Chris Elliott of Daphne) - Act # 2023-25.** Further provides for the right of action for injuries resulting from the illegal furnishing of alcoholic beverages, by basing liability for a person who illegally furnishes alcoholic beverages to an individual who injures a third party on what the furnisher knew or should have known under the circumstances. This will make liability insurance much more widely available and affordable in the state.
- **Allow Online RVP Training (SB 135 by Sen. Chris Elliott of Daphne) - Act # 2023-252.** May not sound like much, but this is a major move allowing RVP (Responsible Vendor Training) to go from the current cumbersome all paper process and allow it to be offered online.
- **Requiring All ABC Background Checks be Conducted by ALEA (HB 426 by Rep. Allen Treadaway of Morris) - Act # 2023-312.** Brings uniformity to the process required by state government for background checks. Must now be done by AL Law Enforcement Agency.
- **RTD Task Force (SJR 95 by Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton of Greensboro) - Act # 2023-558.** We were not successful in working out a compromise between soft drink wholesalers and alcohol wholesalers to get a bill passed allowing retailers to sell Ready to Drink beverages with spirits in them, Leader Singleton is keeping the issue alive and at the forefront by creating a task force made up of 5

House Members, 5 Senators and the Lt. Governor to hold hearings and come back to the 2024 session with a recommendation to move forward.

- **Allow Contribution of Limited Amount of Alcohol for Charity (SB 117 by Sen. Jabo Waggoner of Vestavia) - Act # 2023-136.** Will allow wholesalers and retailers to donate a limited amount of alcoholic beverages to charitable organizations.
 - **Tax Rebate (SB 86 by Sen. Arthur Orr of Decatur) – Act # 2023-377.** Provides a tax rebate to every qualified taxpayer as a one-time refundable income tax credit to partially offset the amount of sales tax paid on groceries in 2021. Amounts are \$150 for individuals and \$300 for families.
 - **Sales Tax Threshold (HB 77 by Rep. Danny Garrett of Trussville) – Act # 2023-422.** Raises the threshold for retailers paying estimated monthly payments to the Dept. of Revenue from \$5,000 to \$20,000.
 - **AL Unconscionable Pricing Act (SB 62 by Sen. Sam Givhan of Huntsville) – Act # 2023-122.** Authorizes the Governor or the Legislature to specify the affected areas and time periods to which the prohibition against imposition of unconscionable pricing would apply.
- Pharmacy:
- **Pharmacy Registration (HB 79 by Rep. Philip Rigsby of Huntsville) – Act # 2023-119.** Requires each holder of a pharmacy permit to designate a representative of the permit holder who would be required to register with the board; and to provide for an additional annual registration fee.
 - **Pharmacy Permits (SB 16 by Sen. Tom Butler of Huntsville) – Act # 2023-60.** For persons required

to have a permit issued by the board to perform pharmacy services, provides that an entity providing pharmacy services to residents of this state, rather than a person, would be required to have a permit issued by the board.

- **Emergency Prescription Refill (HB 314 by Rep. Philip Rigsby of Huntsville) – Act # 2023-231.** Increases the supply of medication that may be dispensed in a one-time emergency refill to include the smallest dispensable package size of a medication; and to further provide for the notice to the prescriber after dispensing.

Record budgets all around were celebrated with final passage and the signature of Governor Ivey. Altogether, some \$16 billion was appropriated through the General Fund, Education Trust Fund, and supplemental appropriation bills for each. Also includes American Rescue Plan (federal) funds that were allocated during a special session at the beginning of the regular session.

- **HB 319 (Rep. Barbara Drummond of Mobile) regulating the sale of vape products is a bill we neither supported nor opposed, came before the Senate last week but was postponed due to opposition. Supporters tried to make changes to make it more favorable to Senators, but it was never brought back up for a final vote.**

Please do not hesitate to contact Patrick McWhorter if you have questions or suggestions concerning any issue. patrick@themcwhortergroup.com or 334-221-0220.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

INDUSTRY NEWS

THE POWER OF POSITIVE TALKING



Michael Sansolo
Retail Food Industry Consultant

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR LIST OF UNFILLED JOBS AND RAPID TURNOVER

Given the industry's current problems with both recruiting and retaining staffers, it might be a good time for supermarket operators in Alabama to take a long and considered look to the northeast for some necessary inspiration.

A few weeks back, Stew Leonard, the namesake and founder of a highly regarded group of unique stores in the New York metropolitan area passed away. His stores—a rare combination of high quality perishables and a carefully curated, yet limited selection of groceries—are recognized throughout the industry for sales, profits and providing customers a highly entertaining shopping experience. But the stores are also deservedly well known for creative management techniques that result in unusually strong retention and customer service.

Years ago, I had a chance to spend time with Leonard and listened to his philosophy on managing staffers in an industry prone to excessively high turnover. Some of his most potent ideas were among the simplest.

Consider the notion of catching people doing things correctly. Far too much staff management in supermarkets is about catching and correcting people when they make mistakes, which, while important, can be demotivating if staffers feel they are micro-managed or overly criticized.

Leonard was a master of finding ways to highlight when jobs were well done ranging from his non-stop chatter with staff while walking stores or creating prizes and incentives throughout the organization.

The philosophy continued even after Leonard retired and left his son, Stew Jr., running the business. The younger Leonard, who communicates with shoppers regularly, recently reported about meeting a staffer at one of his stores. This staffer has only worked at Stew's for a few months after spending 16 years at a competing chain. He told Leonard that's he's already had more appreciative comments in those few months than he did in all his years at the previous job.

The younger Leonard repeated one of his father's most well worn phrases: "A pat on the back is a few feet from a kick in the pants, but it has a mile of different results."

Clearly the attitude has spread at Stew Leonard even as the company grew from a single store to seven locations, which reflects the company's commitment to training to ensure the Stew Leonard's management philosophy is embraced

It's also important to recognize how the company has embraced the changing work environment. Take a quick glance at the company's website aimed at recruiting <https://stewleonards.com/work-at-stews/> and you'll see emphasis on career development (long a tradition at the company), and focus on a range of benefits with detailed explanations as to how staffers can benefit.

But also pay attention to how the company highlights current hot button issues such as employee wellness and charitable efforts that help prospective staffers get a sense of the values the company embraces.

Continued on page 11

Many surveys of today's younger generations—an important target for retail jobs—show heightened interest in working for companies that are perceived to help their communities and those that encourage staffers to do the same. No doubt many retailers in Alabama are significantly involved in local charities ranging from sponsorship of youth sports to significant support of local food banks. Steal a page from Stew Leonard's book and make sure you too are publishing those efforts to both your shoppers and your staffers.

And don't ignore how Stew Leonard's uses e-mail, social media and on-line newsletters to communicate to staffers and the entire community. Increasingly social media sites are the essential link, especially to the younger generations, to communicate to potential employees. Unquestionably you already have many staffers with active TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat and other accounts. Enlist those staffers to help you build a more robust and current social media profile.

For those of you familiar with the Stew Leonard's story you'll recall how the founder was found guilty of tax evasion and incarcerated in the 1990s. But there's a reason the company survived that incident and emerged stronger, larger and an even more attractive employer despite all the hiring woes everyone is having.

Examine how the webpage includes a few paragraphs back on how Stew Leonard's positions its jobs and ask yourself how you would tell your company's own story. What charities, what special perks and what career possibilities could you talk about with your current and future employees.

I'm betting you actually have a lot to offer, but simply don't present it as forcefully as Stew Leonard's. Sure you might not be able to turn your store into the "Disneyland of Supermarkets" (as Stew's was frequently called) but you certainly can use the company's example as a way to create an improved style of management and retention inside your own company.

There are other tools you can employ. Check out these two studies you can download for free from the Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council. (I am the current research director of the council.)

Your front line managers might appreciate reading a study filled with practical tips on how to improve their skills, which you can download at www.cccrc.org and search for "Getting to Great: Management Practices that Drive Performance." Link: https://www.cccrc.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2014/02/Getting_to_Great_Study_2006.pdf

And an earlier report can help demonstrate the competitive and financial advantages of better retention, which will quiet any skeptics on the importance of nurturing staffers. Download that report at www.cccrc.org search for "New Ideas for Retaining Store-Level Employees" https://www.cccrc.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2014/02/New_Ideas_for_Retaining_Store-Level_Employees_2000.pdf

Think about it this way: you have nothing to lose but your list of unfilled jobs and rapid turnover.



Annual Show
Bringing Grocers to the Table

We hope you will join us at the Table

July 9-12, 2023
Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort

The banner features a light blue background with a string of blue and green triangular bunting flags at the top. On the left, there is a circular logo with a fork and knife, and a green bucket with a shovel. On the right, there is a blue beach hat with green flowers and sunglasses. The text is in a mix of bold sans-serif and cursive fonts.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

INDUSTRY NEWS

STILL MORE AHEAD



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

GROCERY INDUSTRY SAW WINS AT ALABAMA STATEHOUSE

When we look back at the past session of the Alabama Legislature, it is hard to appreciate the success for the citizens of the state and those in the grocery business.

The passage of legislation for the initial removal of the four percent grocery tax will benefit everyone who lives in Alabama. A number of neighboring states either do not have a grocery or an income tax, which has made Alabama less competitive as well when it comes to making the state more desirable to live. In addition, in the world of competition to draw in new industry, higher taxes is always an issue.

Reduction of the grocery tax was an important milestone for certain. Yet, the new law that will strengthen penalties for shoplifting and retail theft was a long time coming as well. We have seen crime spike the past three years and in this political environment unfortunately, we have seen efforts to weaken not strengthen the criminal justice system.

However, state representatives and senators heard the significant impact theft has on the retail industry, thus leading to the success in getting the bill to the Governor's desk.

These two bills were important to Alabamians and the grocery industry, but there is still work to be done because small business owners are still struggling with one of their most important issues - recruiting and retaining employees.

The best rule is for government to get out of the way so private business owners can successfully run their operations without bureaucratic interference. However, there is a role for local government to help incentivize, train and educate young people to join the food services business. Alabama has rightly earned awards and the reputation as one of the strongest states when it comes to workforce development. If our state had not made the decision to pivot education and economic development strategy to this area, Alabama may not have become the leader in the auto manufacturing area that it is today.

With all of the heavy industry in our state, we still need the support of communities in both in the metropolitan and rural Alabama. This requires plenty of grocery stores to provide the needs for the growth the state, which has seen more companies from around the world make our state their home. And both existing and new grocery stores mean access to a team of workers to serve their customers.

As did the Nation, Alabama citizens and small businesses struggled through the pandemic. With that, holding onto employees and attracting new ones has been one of the most important issues. State leaders can be proud of their accomplishments from this Spring, but it is not too early to start looking now at the continued needs of the grocery industry.

Paul DeMarco is a former member of the Alabama House of Representatives, serves as general counsel of the Alabama Grocers Association and can be found on Twitter @Paul_DeMarco

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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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INDUSTRY NEWS

GROCERY SHOPPERS REDEFINE VALUE



Jennifer Hatcher

Chief Public Policy Officer & Senior Vice President
Food Marketing Institute

VALUE REPRESENTS THE CORNERSTONE OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY'S PROPOSITION TO CONSUMERS

As universal as the word is across the consumer landscape, recognizing what value means to consumers and how to meaningfully deliver it to them can be challenging. Understanding value in today's shifting cultural context is imperative for the food industry, particularly as shoppers adjust their purchasing patterns and habits amid continued inflation and uncertainty.

The latest survey of grocery shoppers by FMI – The Food Industry Association in our U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2023 series reveals the meaning of “good value” and how it is becoming more complex as consumers navigate grocery aisles. Although definitions vary, value is often understood in terms of price and quantity. However, shoppers are increasingly expanding their notions of value to include quality, relevance, convenience and experience.

Quality reflects the importance of personal food standards and goals around eating well, and includes an emphasis on freshness, minimal processing, health and nutrition, product sourcing, and ethical considerations such as sustainability and labor standards.

Relevance refers to shoppers' needs versus wants and reflects their decision-making around necessary versus indulgent items. Questions about how well a product aligns with personal/household preferences, its usefulness, and its potential for waste have taken on greater importance as shoppers seek to meet the preferences and needs of individual household members while sticking to their budgets.

Experience captures the importance of pleasure, enjoyment, novelty, variety, and discovery as well as the physical aspects of shopping such as store cleanliness and the friendliness and knowledge of store employees.

Lastly, convenience continues to be a key element of value, including more typical criteria such as speed, ease, and accessibility (which shoppers sometimes trade for lower price) as well as expectations around engagement, flexibility, experience and relevance.

While shoppers say that getting good value is a priority across all income and demographic levels, younger shoppers are clearly driving the shifting definition of value toward a more holistic measurement that goes beyond the traditional price-to-quantity ratio. For example, 62% of millennials increasingly say they prefer to minimize food waste by buying only what they need, a strategy that speaks to relevance.

Convenience and a pleasing shopping experience are also key drivers of value for younger shoppers: 47% of millennials say that they are willing to spend more money to avoid shopping at multiple stores, while 50% say they'd spend more to shop at more pleasant stores, compared to just 16% of Baby Boomers.

Younger shoppers are also more willing to buy the best quality items regardless of price. Fifty-two percent of millennials and 42% of Gen Z-ers express that sentiment, compared to just 22% of Baby Boomers.

Continued on page 15

Across generations, shoppers also note benefits related to convenience and experience as factors for choosing in-store versus online. For example, while some shoppers appreciate amenities such as in-store cafes, pharmacies, and banking, which help them save time by combining grocery shopping with other household tasks, others appreciate not having to deal with crowds and lines. Store cleanliness, ease of navigation, familiarity, and employee treatment also play roles in decisions not just about which stores shoppers trust and prefer but also whether and when they shop in person or online.

Ultimately, shoppers' desire for more flexibility and control over their shopping process shapes their decisions about which methods they employ. While the search for "value" remains a priority for most shoppers, how they define it has evolved. Today's shoppers see value through the lens of a broader range of considerations that reflect the complexity of their lives, habits, values, and priorities.

Loyalty has a distinct connection to value, so understanding value from a consumer perspective is imperative for the food industry. Retailers can differentiate themselves by thinking about value more holistically. Developing a unique identity by embracing multiple dimensions of value that go beyond specific categories or departments can help retailers stand out by standing for more than just good prices and deals – although both remain a top priority!

To download the U.S. Grocer Shopper Trends 2023 – Value Matrix report and to sign up to receive updates on future reports in the series, visit www.FMI.org/GroceryTrends.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

ASSOCIATION NEWS

2023 NGA FLY-IN



The Alabama Grocers Association applauds the Alabama Congressional Delegation's support of our state's grocery industry. AGA members Jimmy Wright, Jay Mitchell, Julia Mitchell, Wade Payne, and AGA President/CEO Ellie Taylor discussed key legislation in meetings at the NGA Fly-In for Fair Competition in Washington, DC. Topics ranged from the Credit Card Competition Act, 2023 Farm Bill, and Anti-Trust.





ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

INDUSTRY NEWS

GROCERY PERSPECTIVE



Greg Ferrara
President & CEO
National Grocers Association

A GROCERY PERSPECTIVE ON THE 2023 FARM BILL

Work on a Farm Bill reauthorization is under way, and activity is ramping up toward the food and ag package that holds significant impact for independent grocers, especially those in historically underserved parts of the country.

Earlier this year, NGA outlined its 2023 Farm Bill priorities to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, and U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, the entities driving this evolving legislation.

As Stephanie Johnson, NGA's VP of Government Relations, aptly noted, "Independent community grocers are a linchpin for communities across the country by providing nourishing food to millions of Americans at an affordable price. Legislation must consider the critical role independent grocers play across America so they can continue expanding food access and supporting local economies."

NGA's team is working with lawmakers to ensure that the new Farm Bill reflects changes and technology in the grocery marketplace and addresses the needs of the communities that independent community grocers serve, looking to build on the inroads we have made since the previous Farm Bill five years ago.

To be sure, there are many challenges for the legislation as it advances through a divided Congress, with a House of Representatives controlled by a slim Republican majority. Namely, efforts to boost nutrition programs generally supported by Democrats face erosion by GOP members including some who favor work requirements for SNAP participants.

Partisan differences notwithstanding, SNAP is a fundamental safety net program for millions of Americans and has largely been a success due to the private-public partnership it shares with supermarket operators.

SNAP, which helps low-income families to afford nutritious foods and reduces hunger, is responsible for more than 4,000 jobs in Alabama across grocery and supporting industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, transportation and municipal services. The jobs required to administer SNAP at the grocery store level generate \$123 million in grocery industry and related wages in Alabama. While SNAP purchases are not subject to sales taxes, sales helped generate additional tax activity – in Alabama, that means \$18 million in state and local tax revenues and \$17 million in federal tax receipts.

At its core, SNAP improves access to food and encourages healthy eating behavior by providing incentives rather than restrictive mandates. These themes from previous Farm Bills should carry over to the new legislation.

To that end, NGA favors maintaining SNAP Choice, which offers flexibility to both retailer and participants, and ensures families can choose foods appropriate for their unique situation.

After successful piloting, NGA supports making SNAP online a permanent feature of the program and, to ensure it continues to operate as intended, providing technical support for retailers to properly implement and expand the service.

That expansion should come with maintaining the program under its current structure. Changes to SNAP that have been suggested in recent years, such as block granting or bulk food distribution boxes, threaten the viability of grocery stores in communities where food access is most vulnerable.

Continued on page 17

Further, NGA supports expanding and streamlining the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), the nutrition incentive program that has successfully boosted access to and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

And finally, grocery retailers should not be subject to processing fees on EBT transactions or an EBT tax. With credit card transaction fees already among grocery retailers' most onerous operating costs, further burdensome expenses would threaten their ability to serve communities most in need.

As negotiation toward a new Farm Bill continues, grocers need lawmakers to understand that its impact stretches far beyond the fruited plain, into the grocery aisles and the communities they serve, and the other businesses and organizations they support, driving growth and wellbeing of both rural and urban areas throughout the United States.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

ASSOCIATION NEWS

2023 SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE



The Alabama Grocers Association's President and CEO Ellie Taylor attended the Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries 2023 Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture in Montgomery. AGA was a proud sponsor and excited to be a part of highlighting agriculture and the food industry in Alabama.





2023-2024 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Anna Anderson
Ragland Brothers Retail
Piggyback Scholarship



Katelyn Ary
Associated Grocers of the South
Piggyback Scholarship



Kamryn Bailey
Parent Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. UNITED



Layne Bethune
James L. Smotherman
Memorial Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. UNITED



Chantal Bettin
Parent Scholarship
JTM Corporation



Laney Bishop
Parent Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. UNITED



Lila Blackburn
Piggly Wiggly of Red Bay
Piggyback Scholarship



Lily Bradford
Parent Scholarship
Grocery Outlet



Emily Buck
Parent Scholarship
Publix Super Markets, Inc.



Elaina Collins
Parent Scholarship
Mitchell Grocery Corporation



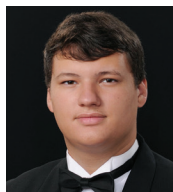
Olivia Davis
Parent Scholarship
A & R Super Markets, Inc.



Reece Donald
Parent Scholarship
Byars | Wright, Inc.



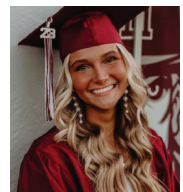
Macy Ellison
Mary G. Hardin
Memorial Scholarship
Kelley Foods/Ben E. Keith



Hagen Hagood
Gateway Foods
Piggyback Scholarship



Zyon Hardnett
Student Scholarship
Winn-Dixie



Kendal Hargrove
Parent Scholarship
Houchens Industries, Inc.



Brooke Johnson
Parent Scholarship
Milo's



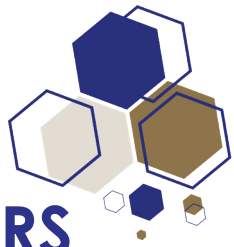
Foster Johnson
Student Scholarship
Publix Super Markets, Inc.



Hannah Kimbrough
Student Scholarship
Hometown Grocery



Londyn Koester
Student Scholarship
Houchens Industries, Inc.



2023-2024 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



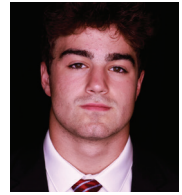
William Lamberth
Langley
Piggyback Scholarship



Ashley Lopez
Parent Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. UNITED



Mary Lorino
Parent Scholarship
Contri Brothers
Gift Baskets & Flowers



Michael Lorino
Student Scholarship
Contri Brothers
Gift Baskets & Flowers



Charles McDaniel
Parent Scholarship
Pictsweet Farms



Chavez Melton
Student Scholarship
Winn-Dixie



JoAnna Mitchell
Parent Scholarship
Mitchell Grocery Corporation



Caroline Moore
Parent Scholarship
Baker Foods



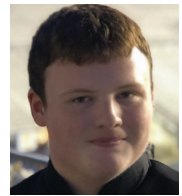
Alexis Nelson
Student Scholarship
Kroger



Dakota NeSmith
Jack Mitchell
Memorial Scholarship
Mitchell Grocery Corporation



Maddox Padgett
Associated Grocers of the South
Piggyback Scholarship



Ethan Parker
Student Scholarship
Mitchell Grocery Corporation



Emma Pettus
Parent Scholarship
Big Star Florence



Coleman Poole
Parent Scholarship
Buffalo Rock Company



Joshua Potter
Parent Scholarship
Red Diamond



Pressley Rains
Parent Scholarship
Alabama Crown
Distributing Company



Christian-Charles Rice
Student Scholarship
Gateway Foods



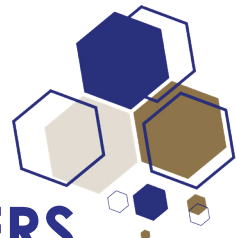
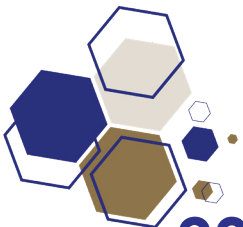
Rebekah Rollins
Student Scholarship
Walmart



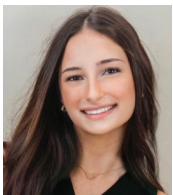
Alana Smith
Student Scholarship
Publix Super Markets, Inc.



Noah Smith
Parent Scholarship
Red Diamond



2023-2024 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Hannah Stewart
Parent Scholarship
Houchens Industries, Inc.



Joshua Stone
Mary Lee Hardin Memorial Scholarship
UTZ/Golden Flake



Tate Thomas
Parent Scholarship
Campbell's Snacks



Bryan Turberville
Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Piggyback Scholarship



Jalen Vinson
Piggly Wiggly of Red Bay Piggyback Scholarship



Jaycee Vinson
Piggly Wiggly of Red Bay Piggyback Scholarship



Emerald Wilkins
Student Scholarship
Renfroe's Market



Jacob Woder
Gateway Foods Piggyback Scholarship



Dawson Wright
Piggly Wiggly of Red Bay Piggyback Scholarship



Emily Wright
Parent Scholarship
Wright's Market



Wesley Wright
Parent Scholarship
Food Outlet



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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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ASSOCIATION NEWS

MEAT DEPOT BY FOOD GIANT



Meat Depot by Food Giant put an end to a West Birmingham food desert on April 5, 2023. Occupying a previously gutted Winn-Dixie location, this Cost Plus 10% Store filled the six-year vacancy of 2220 Bessemer Road. However, the key to making a daunting project, that at one point seemed fruitless, become attainable and successful was having all the stakeholders with a piece in the puzzle lean in, collaborate, and buy in.

This sizable project posed multiple challenges from day one. The biggest challenge was with the construction barriers to entry with this stripped location: the electrical did not work; plumbing did not work; the equipment, cases and coolers were no longer there. Since it had been vacant for so many years, it was difficult to determine what was taken out and what was still salvageable. Comparing and matching the old Winn-Dixie store's infrastructure plans to the new store's plans and working with all the contractors took a lot longer and cost a lot more than what was originally expected on the front end.

The longest challenge of the process as the retailer was working with research firms and the architects to do the market study, the sales survey, and the pro forma to show why a store there is needed

and would be viable. They also had to show the reasons that the incentives and rebates were necessary in order to make it viable. At initial glance financially, developing this grocery store did not make sense.

However, for this community and the City of Birmingham, developing a grocery store was a priority. Mayor Randall Woodfin earmarked money that was designated to end this local food desert. Cornell Wesley, Chief Development Officer for the Department of Innovation and Economic Opportunity at the City of Birmingham, offered a development deal where the store would receive half of the sales tax for 10 years since they were remodeling and investing in bringing the store back up to standards. They also received an upfront stipend to help defray what they were going to have in direct costs updating the plumbing, electrical, etc. that had been stripped.

This changed the game. When the city and their development office, the landlord, the bank, and Opportunity Alabama helped leverage various sources of funding to back this project to improve the quality of the community and local economy, the project finally became attainable.

“It was a situation where the neighborhood needed a store, but at typical market rates, paying average market rent, paying full price for remodeling and construction, trying to still be competitive in the store, and pay it back, the numbers just did not work,” said Mitchell Grocery Corporation Vice President Jay Mitchell. “It was going to be too expensive for what was there, but with the City being willing to step in with some development money to defray some of that remodel cost and the landlord being willing to lean in some on bringing an anchor tenant back to the center, then there was a synergy there when everyone leaned in that the deal worked.”

Becoming a local neighborhood market took this team about four years. Starting from scratch, they had to hire and train 140 people. They met with the Birmingham City Council and local community leaders to learn about what they wanted to see in a store and what they felt like was not being offered in the community that they would like to have.

Continued on page 23



Since opening, the store has done extremely well, collecting 10% over what was initially projected. Mayor Woodfin attended the ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening, greeting customers and sacking groceries. Mitchell said that they are really pleased with community support that they have received since day one and that it was a great feeling for everyone involved.



“From the size of the grand opening crowd and the fact that the same size crowd was there every morning for a couple of weeks, I think it shows that there was a need in the community, a need for more choice, and a need for

more value proposition,” said Mitchell. “It was definitely an affirmation when we saw the customers come through the store that the planning was right and had correctly assessed the need.”

Any project of this size is going to have its surprises. Mitchell said that if they were to tackle a project of this size again, they would do it selectively to where the sales volume was great enough, the community need was demonstrated, and the financial piece was there. Mitchell explained that it is much more than the average day-to-day operation to get something like this off the ground and not the kind of project that he could take on every day. Next time, he will aim to have a better understanding and spend more time on pre-planning the construction side. Mitchell recommends that other retailers looking to take on a similar project have a plan; have your data right; and lean on your wholesaler and community

partners for their knowledge of the demographics in the area, what the sales potential are, and the things that you would need to do to make the store successful.

“We are grateful that we had this opportunity and as independents we were considered for a project of this size,” said Mitchell. “I think it goes to show the viability and flexibility of the independent grocers and getting to know their consumer and their neighborhood and tailoring their offering to what their consumer wants.”



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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ASSOCIATION NEWS

GOVERNOR IVEY HONORS BUD'S BEST COOKIES



"Governor Kay Ivey recognized six Alabama companies for success in selling their goods and services in markets across the globe, helping to sustain robust export activities that create jobs and spark economic growth across the state.

The recipients of the 2023 Governor's Trade Excellence Awards represent a broad swath of activities within the state's economy, ranging from aerospace/defense, industrial consultancy, food production, forestry, automotive manufacturing and medical devices.

Bud's Best Cookies was recognized as a regional baker with 150 employees and a state-of-the-art facility in Hoover."

To read the full press release, visit <https://governor.alabama.gov/newsroom/2023/05/governor-ivey-honors-tuskegee-university-and-alabama-exporters-with-trade-excellence-awards/>



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the Grocery Industry

ASSOCIATION NEWS

2023 AGEF GOLF OUTING

The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation held their Annual Golf Outing on Thursday, April 13, 2023, at Inverness Country Club in Birmingham, Alabama. The event raised over \$41,000 for the Alabama Grocers Education Foundation to provide scholarships to employees and children of employees of Alabama Grocers Association member companies. To date, AGEF has awarded over \$1.4 million dollars in scholarships because of the tremendous support of our members at our events.

The winners of the Golf Outing were as follows: First Place Team: Gulf Distributing Company Team. Second Place Team: Buffalo Rock/Pepsi Team. Third Place Team: Alabama Crown Distributing Company Team. The Longest Drive: Alex Johnson. Closest to the Pin: Hal Tolleson.

The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation Golf Outing would not be as successful without the many companies that sponsored this event. The Presenting Sponsor for this event was UNFI. A special thanks to the AGA Health & Wellness Trust and Red Diamond for sponsoring our breakfast. Thank you, Byars | Wright and Publix Super Markets, Inc., for sponsoring lunch.



Additional sponsors of the AGEF 2023 Golf Outing included A & R Super Markets; Alabama Crown Distributing Company; Alabama Power; Alliance Retail Group; Associated Grocers of the South; Associated Wholesale Grocers; Blue Bell Creameries; BTC Wholesale Distributors; Buffalo Rock - Pepsi; Bunzl Distribution; Chambliss & Chastain Group - Merrill Lynch, Coca-Cola Bottling Company, UNITED; Designer Greetings; Don Francisco's Coffee; Federated Insurance; Gulf Distributing Company; J.M. Smucker; Keurig Dr Pepper; Lactalis Retail Dairy; Mitchell Grocery Corporation; Molson Coors; Perfect Hydration; Pictsweet Farms; Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Company; Red Diamond; Reynolds American; Truno Retail Technology Solutions; United-Johnson Brothers; and UTZ/Golden Flake.

Thank you to the many companies that contributed products for the goody bags.

“Something remarkable happens when people come together to accomplish something that is greater than themselves, and today our industry united on the golf course to do just that,” said Stephanie Crabtree, Event & Education Director of the Alabama Grocers Association. “The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation’s mission is to enrich education and career development in the grocery industry. We take pride in our efforts of uniting for this mission, as we have raised over \$1.4 million in scholarships for deserving college students.”

“We are proud of the thousands of scholarships our Foundation has given since its inception,” said Ellie Taylor, AGA President/CEO. “AGA is happy to be a small part of furthering higher education in the state of Alabama and throughout the entire country.”

Please mark your calendars for the 2023 AGEF Clay Shoot on October 12th at Selwood Farms in Alpine, Alabama. We hope to see you there!







ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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ASSOCIATION NEWS

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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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ASSOCIATION NEWS

BUY ALABAMA'S BEST DAY ON THE LAWN

The Alabama Grocers Association, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, and the Alabama Food Manufacturers and Producers Association held a media briefing and sampling event for the Buy Alabama's Best campaign on Wednesday, March 22, 2023, on the Alabama State Capitol Lawn.

Speakers included Honorable Governor Kay Ivey; Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries Commissioner Rick Pate; AFMPA President Scott Smith; Alabama Grocers Association Chairman Harold Garrett; Director of Cause Marketing and Corporate Partnerships at Children's of Alabama Emily Hornak; and Alabama Grocers Association President and AFMPA Executive Director Ellie Taylor.

The Buy Alabama's Best Campaign formed in 2006 when four Alabama companies, the Alabama Grocers Association, and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries saw a need to identify products that were made in Alabama. Today, Buy Alabama's Best has grown to over 35 companies that are either headquartered in Alabama, or produce, manufacture or make their products in our state.



Alabama food manufacturers and producers not only sell products in Alabama and employ Alabamians, but they also purchase vast amounts of raw farm products to make goods, paper, boxes and packaging. Alabama food product sales have a \$2 billion impact on Alabama's economy, tax base and along with the food service industries, employ one out of every four Alabamians.

Retailers throughout Alabama will be supporting this campaign in their stores with Alabama product displays, ads, signage and special promotions. When consumers shop in their local grocery store, they can look for the Buy Alabama's Best logo under products to ensure they are buying the best products made right here in Alabama.

The Buy Alabama's Best Campaign is proud of the partnership with Children's of Alabama. Through this partnership, we have raised over \$850,000 for the charity through icon sales, donations, and grants.

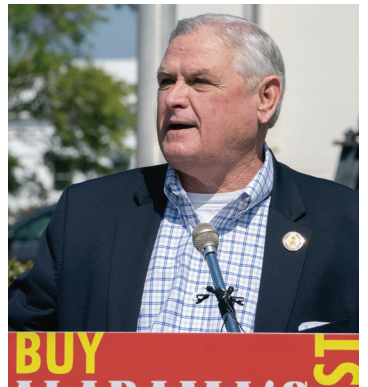
Founded in 1911, Children's of Alabama provides medical care for ill and injured children. With more than 3.5 million square feet, it is one of the largest pediatric medical facilities in the United States. The Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders treats more than 90% of Alabama's children with cancer and blood disorders and is committed to finding a cure for more than 2,000 children each year.

"We are very excited about this year's program and our partnership with Children's of Alabama," said Ellie Taylor, President and CEO of the Alabama Grocers Association and Executive Director of the Alabama Food Manufacturers and Producers Association. "Children's Hospital touches the lives of so many, and we are lucky to have such a great charity for our campaign, where all of the funds raised will stay right here in Alabama."

"Children's of Alabama is so grateful for our partnership with Buy Alabama's Best," said Emily Hornak, Director of Cause Marketing and Corporate Partnerships at Children's of Alabama. "Across Alabama, Buy Alabama's Best provides amazing awareness and integral philanthropy for our hospital. This partnership aids the Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders and their pursuit of being committed to a cure."

For a complete list of Buy Alabama Best participating companies, visit www.buyalabamasbest.org.







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ASSOCIATION NEWS

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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION
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ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS



Annual Show

Bringing Grocers to the Table

July 9-12, 2023

Beach Party



Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort



AGEF CLAY SHOOT

10.12.23
Selwood Farm



RETAILER OF THE YEAR

Gerry D'Alessandro
Fresh Value
CEO



WHOLESALE OF THE YEAR

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



VENDOR OF THE YEAR

Mike Hanson
Milo's
Director of Key Accounts



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Vice President Of Sales
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