



# frontline

The Official Monthly Publication of the Minnesota Grocers Association

November 2023

## Preparing for Minnesota's New Labor Mandates

There are several impactful state mandates that will be taking effect for Minnesota employers on January 1, 2024. It is crucial that companies develop a plan for how they intend to implement these new requirements.

The most impactful mandate is the requirement that every employer in the state provide Earned Sick & Safe Time (ESST) to all employees. ESST is paid leave employers must provide to employees in Minnesota that can be used when an employee is sick, to care for a sick family member, or to seek assistance if an employee or their family member has experienced domestic abuse. These hours accrue at the rate of one hour of ESST for every 30 hours worked, up to at least 48 hours a year. Hours must be made available to all employees who work at least 80 hours for an employer in the state.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) has been developing and issuing guidance for MN businesses since the law passed, but is still in the process of releasing FAQ's for several important parts of the requirements. Some of the guidance released thus far is related to the different ways that employers can choose to make ESST available. These include the option to frontload employees with ESST hours every year or combine PTO and ESST

## 2024 Membership Renewal

The MGA 2024 membership renewals have been emailed. Doing business in Minnesota, you understand the complexities of running a business in the state. The MGA is a great business partner and is the only organization speaking on behalf of the Minnesota food industry. We help you navigate laws, regulations, and serve as a strong partner with all levels of government. We represent your interests at the Capitol, analyze vast amounts of information,

into a single pool of hours. The DOLI website [www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave](http://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave) has resources to assist in planning your company's strategy to implement this law. The MGA is in constant contact with DOLI, so please feel free to reach out to us with your questions.

Also taking effect on January 1, is the new law prohibiting inquiries into the pay history of a job applicant. This law change amended the Minnesota Human Rights Act and applies to both external and internal candidates. Be sure to update hiring materials and forms to remove references to prior pay history and train employees involved in the hiring process. It is important that they understand that they can no longer ask applicants about prior pay. Not complying with this new regulation will put your company at risk for large fines and potential civil action for violations of the applicant's human rights.

Several new laws pertaining to safety in warehouses, meat packing operations, and poultry processing plants are also coming online on the first of the year. The emphasis of the new statute is on the development and implementation of an ergonomics program that includes annual evaluations, employee training, and employee involvement. Employers in these three industries must also maintain specific records as detailed in the statute.

and pass along the vital pieces to keep your business in compliance, saving you time and money – a direct value of your MGA membership. Our decades of hard work representing industry bring direct value to all businesses that play a role in the food industry of Minnesota. Please submit your renewal today! **KA**

As you submit payment the updated association address is: **1360 Energy Park Dr., Ste. 110, St. Paul, MN 55108. KC**

## 2024 Legislative Sponsorships



The MGA invites you to consider becoming a 2024 Legislative Sponsor. These sponsor dollars directly support our efforts in advocacy for industry in St. Paul. A legislative sponsorship is an investment in your business. Sponsors receive recognition throughout the year in all of our legislative updates, publications, and events.

Thank you to **Kowalski's Companies, Inc.** and **Kwik Trip, Inc.** for your early sponsorships. **SB**

## 2024/2025 Guidebooks and Employment Posters Coming

The MGA provides several resources to members to ensure they are up to date on the latest regulations that impact industry. The refreshed 2024-25 MGA Business Regulations Guidelines book will be available for members after the first of the year. This is a user-friendly resource to ensure your business complies with the multitude of regulations governing our industry. In addition, the state minimum wage is set to increase on January 1, 2024, and the new ESST law requires a mandated employee posting. Both of these regulations are included in the 2024/2025 Federal/State All-in-One Employment Poster. As a member service, the MGA will send each member location one complimentary 2024-25 MGA Business Regulations Guidelines book and Federal/State All-in-One Employment Poster. These tools give your team a one-stop resource to manage the complex layers of government rules and regulations and keep you in compliance. **KA**

### MGA Contact Key

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## MGA Foundation Supports Industry Careers



### MGAF Scholarship Program Expands

Be sure that your employees take advantage of the 2024 Minnesota Grocers Association Scholarship Program which will be open for applications from **January 15 – March 15, 2024**. We are excited to announce that due to the outstanding support of the MGAF's programs, we will be awarding **twenty-five \$2000** scholarships - an increase of \$500 per scholarship! This program will be open to all employees and any of their dependents who are high school seniors, college freshmen, sophomores, or juniors. **ST**

### MGAF Piggyback Scholarship Program

The MGAF offers a supplemental scholarship program available to all MGA members. This program allows members to have all the benefits of their own personalized scholarship program without any expenses. The only cost is the scholarship itself (the minimum award is \$500). Any employees who complete the application will automatically be considered for both the MGAF scholarship and the company's personalized scholarship. This will double their opportunity while only completing one streamlined application. Contract due by **December 1, 2023**. **ST**

### Carts to Careers (CTC) Tuition Support Program

The Retail Management Certificate (RMC) program is a nationally recognized, industry-endorsed 8-course education certificate program offered by Alexandria Technical and Community College. The RMC is an accredited business education program that is completed 100% online in two years or less. The program is designed to meet the educational requirements of the food industry and provide valuable skills in all areas of business. To support industry careers, the MGAF has a CTC grant opportunity, through a State of Minnesota appropriation, that supports RMC students. See insert for more information. **KC**



### MGA Foundation Program Webinar

**Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.**, the MGAF will be offering an informational webinar to discuss all of our 2024 programs. Topics will include: MGAF scholarship details, the outline of the Piggyback Program, and highlights of our Carts to Careers grants – with an interactive Q&A. **KC**

### Minnesota Grown Retailer of the Year Mini Contest

Congratulations to Nilssen's Hub Food Center in Zumbrota for winning the MGA Minnesota Grown Retailer of the Year Mini Contest. There were great submissions that showcased a variety of Minnesota Grown products. Watch for the statewide 2024 Minnesota Grown Retailer of the Year Contest winner announcement coming soon. **ST**



### MGA Coupon Clearing House Closes

The MGA Coupon Clearing House will be closing on **January 1, 2024**. We will no longer be able to accept coupons for redemption. Watch your email and payments for next steps and processing options. **KC**

## Voting Corner

### Municipal Elections – November 7



There are no statewide elections this November, but there are several municipal contests being decided. These include city council or mayoral elections in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth. It is important to take the time to vote as the consequences of these elections are incredibly important to the communities you serve.

### Reminder: Employees Allowed Paid Time Off to Vote

There are no statewide elections this November, but there are several municipal contests being decided. These include city council or mayoral elections in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth. It is important to take the time to vote as the consequences of these elections are incredibly important to the communities you serve.

### Bag Hunger Campaign

The 2023 Bag Hunger Campaign kicked off on October 22. Grocers all across the state are creating exciting displays, partnering with vendors, and engaging their customers in our goal to Bag Hunger. Our goal is to raise 1.5 million meals before the program concludes on November 11 and we need your help. Please record all donations, food and monetary, to reach our goal. Help us tell the whole story by submitting your campaign collection forms to the MGA by **December 8**. This submission is also where you submit photos of your best display(s) to the MGA for a chance to win a coveted Silver Plate Award.



We want to thank this year's generous sponsors: **Country Hearth/Pan-O-Gold Baking Co., Crystal Farms Dairy Company, Faribault Foods, Inc., Hormel Foods, KEMPS, Keurig/7UP, Land O' Frost, Old Dutch Foods, Inc., Post Consumer Brands, Prairie Farms Dairy, Reyes Coca-Cola, and Russ Davis Wholesale. KA**

### 2023 PCR Donations – Still Time

Minnesota has a Political Contribution Refund (PCR) program that allows you to donate up to \$50 for an individual or \$100 for a married couple to a legislator or political party free of charge. **YES, YOU READ THAT CORRECTLY**, the state of Minnesota reimburses you for donating to a pro-industry legislator. You are eligible for this program every year, so make sure to get your 2023 PCR donation in before December 31, 2023. It should be noted that refunds are only available for contributions at the state level and you must be a Minnesota resident. Federal campaigns are not eligible for the program. **SB**

### MGA Engagement

Have you considered expanding your engagement with the MGA? The MGA is seeking members who are interested in advancing the objectives of the association by joining the Council or Foundation Board of Directors. Both are active boards and your participation provides expanded opportunities to get involved in the future direction of the association. The time commitment needed is minimal with an invaluable return. **JP**

# WASHINGTON NEWS

## Government Shutdown Averted, For Now

Defying expectations, the US government averted a shutdown by passing a continuing resolution to fund the government for 45 days - until just before Thanksgiving. The continuing resolution provides funding for USDA to continue operating SNAP at its current level and to allow USDA to spend whatever funding is needed to support both the current and future participants of WIC through November 17. Congress has until that date to come to a deal on government funding or they risk a shutdown.

## House Speaker McCarthy Ousted

In reaction to Speaker McCarthy's decision to compromise with Democrats on the continuing resolution that averted a shutdown, Florida Republican Matt Gaetz successfully moved to remove McCarthy from his position as Speaker of the House. This is the first time in American history that a Speaker has been removed from their position. As of writing, it's unclear as to who will replace McCarthy. Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-NC) is serving as Speaker pro tempore in the interim until the House elects a new speaker. The Republicans have met several times but have yet to reach a consensus on a replacement. In the meantime, no legislative business can be done in the House until a new Speaker is named.

## October Brings Changes to SNAP

The new work requirements detailed in the debt ceiling agreement for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) participating in SNAP kicked in on October 1. This means that ABAWDs up to the age of 52 will be subject to SNAP's time limit. This means that participants aged 50 and 51 may face the risk of losing their benefits if they fail to meet additional work requirements for over three months within a three-year period.

## Debit Interchange Rate

The Federal Reserve is preparing a proposal that would adjust the regulated debit interchange rate that grocers and other merchants pay to process debit card transactions. Through the Durbin amendment in the 2010 Dodd-Frank law, the Federal Reserve has the power to lower the cap if it determines the costs for processing debit card payments are declining. The specific details of the proposal will be forthcoming. There will also be a public comment period. This is a welcomed action, and the MGA will continue to update on the next steps.

## EBT Fee Prohibition Expires

When the 2018 Farm Bill expired at the end of September, the prohibition on swipe fees for EBT transactions expired. This prohibition had been in place for 5 years protecting retailers from processing fees charged by EBT processors. New fees could force retailers to raise prices, further squeezing low-income families, or could lead to an exodus of retailers from the program. Industry is aggressively lobbying Congress to continue the EBT fee prohibition in the next Farm Bill.

## MGA Joins Call for Summer EBT Benefits

Joining members of the Partners to End Hunger Coalition, the MGA signed onto a letter requesting that the Walz administration take full advantage of the opportunity to build and implement a Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program in Minnesota. Summer EBT leverages funds from the USDA to provide grocery-buying benefits to low-income families with school-aged children when schools are closed for the summer. The program would reach up to 319,000 eligible children in Minnesota and bring over \$38 million dollars into our local retailers.

## Advertising Package - Get Noticed

Make the MGA a part of your marketing plan for the coming year. Whether you're looking to reach grocery retailers, suppliers, or wholesalers, our community of engaged c-suite executives is the perfect, high-value audience for your marketing efforts. The Minnesota Grocer magazine features authoritative insights and opinions that cover all facets of the state's grocery business. From new regulations and technological innovations to local and national trends, this magazine contains fresh stories that provide a deep understanding of Minnesota's grocery community. MGA's extensive membership ensures that your advertising message reaches the top Minnesota grocery retail decision-makers. **KA**



# 2024 MGA Annual Conference



Join your peers at the 2024 MGA Annual Conference – the largest and only event focused on the entire Minnesota food industry. This conference brings together the top retail decision-makers, who represent the broad spectrum of the state's food industry to meet with leading supplier companies for a one-of-a-kind event.



## THANK YOU

We Appreciate the 2024 Annual Conference Sponsors

### LEVEL 1

Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc.  
KEMPS  
SpartanNash

### LEVEL 2

Mason Brothers Co.  
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### LEVEL 3

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Post Consumer Brands  
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### LEVEL 4

JB/No Name Steaks

*\*as of 10/20/2023*

Sponsoring the Annual Conference elevates your company and shows your commitment to the food industry of Minnesota. You receive tremendous name recognition not only during the conference but throughout the entire year. Your organization is highlighted multiple times in MGA publications, including the monthly Frontline newsletter, the quarterly Minnesota Grocer magazine, and the MGA Annual Member Directory. Sponsorship is open for the 2024 MGA Annual Conference. Thank you to the below companies who have supported the MGA and are committed to industry. **KA**



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Suite #110  
St. Paul, MN 55108

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## bulletin BOARD

### October 22 – November 11

Bag Hunger Campaign  
Statewide  
MGA Program

### November 16

MGA Foundation Webinar  
MGA Program

### January 1

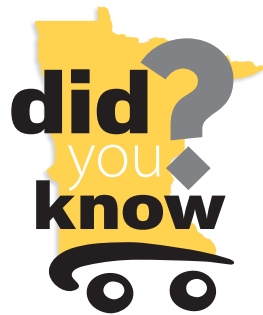
MGA Membership  
Renewal Due

### January 12

MGA Foundation Scholarship  
Program Begins  
MGA Program

### February 12

MN Legislative Session Begins  
St. Paul, MN



The MGA is committed to bringing our members streamlined solutions to topical conversations. We are pleased to provide relevant sharable tools, tips, and resources for your customers. The MGA “It’s Turkey Time” is a great example (see insert). This is a take-home to provide your customers with safety tips for holiday cooking. Simply copy and provide to your shoppers. (KA for PDF)



## You Asked it

**Q:** I am interested in selling low-dose CBD products, what do I need to do?

**A:** You must be registered with the MN Department of Health in order to sell hemp-derived cannabinoids, including THC and/or CBD products. This includes edibles and beverages, as well as non-intoxicating tinctures, [www.health.state.mn.us/people/cannabis/edible](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/cannabis/edible). Edible cannabinoid products are subject to the 10% Cannabis Tax. Nonintoxicating topical products are not subject to the 10% Cannabis Tax. Both intoxicating and nonintoxicating products are subject to any state and local sales tax. Edible cannabinoid products must be kept in a locked case or behind the counter. Beverages do not need to be behind the counter. Be sure to check with your city for any additional licensing requirements or regulations.

**Questions? Call MGA 1-800-966-8352**



**DISCLAIMER:** This information is provided by MGA as a service to its members. This information does not constitute legal advice. As legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case and laws and regulations are frequently changing, nothing provided herein should be used as a substitute for the advice of counsel in the relevant jurisdiction.