



frontline

The Official Monthly Publication of the Minnesota Grocers Association

January 2024

2024 Legislative Session on Horizon

Lawmakers are scheduled to return to St. Paul on February 12 to kick off the 2024 legislative session. Democrats still maintain complete control over state government and will look to build off of their successes from the last session. All 6,705 bills introduced during the first year of the biennium are still in play. And, we anticipate many additional introductions.

The state's budget forecast was recently released and is predicting a surplus of \$2.4 billion for the current budget biennium of Fiscal Year 2024/25. However, that surplus is almost exactly what will be needed to balance the budget for FY 2026/27, which predicts a deficit of \$2.3 billion. The results of this forecast decrease the ability for much new spending in the upcoming session. Governor Walz and DFL leaders have stated that they will have a limited supplemental budget and focus on bonding and infrastructure.

2024 MGA Foundation Scholarships Increase

Make sure your employees take advantage of the 2024 Minnesota Grocers Association Foundation (MGAF) Scholarship program. The MGAF will be awarding 25 \$2,000 scholarships in 2024 – this reflects a \$500 increase per scholarship. Your terrific support of the MGAF Golf Event and silent auction has allowed us to increase these awards, providing more dollars to deserving students. Thank you to all our event-sponsoring companies and to all those who donated and purchased items at this outstanding event.



Promotional materials are available on the MGA website at <https://www.mngrocers.com/members/scholarship-main/> and are also included in your 2024 membership renewal packet. Included in those materials is a FAQs sheet, an application guide that will provide you with the tools you'll need to fill out the online application, a small scholarship poster, and a full-size poster to hang in the break room or any other central location. This year's program is open from **January 15 – March 15. ST**

MGA Capitol Checkout Calls Begin ✓

Stay up to date on the information from the 2024 legislative session through the MGA. Join us for our bi-weekly Capitol Check Out calls. The MGA Government Relations Team invites you to join us for a discussion on the latest news from St. Paul. These exclusive members-only conference calls last up to 30 minutes and give you pertinent, up-to-the-minute legislative information that will impact your bottom line. Mark your calendars for **February 16** at 9:00 am. **SB**



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Become an MGA Legislative Sponsor



Legislative sponsorship is an investment in your business and supports our efforts in advocating for industry in St. Paul. Sponsors receive recognition throughout the year in all of our legislative updates, publications, and events. See insert. **SB**

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Save the Date

MGA 2024 Day on Hill 3.5.24

The MGA's annual Day on the Hill will take place on **Tuesday, March 5**. The day will include informational briefings from the MGA Government Relations Team, meetings with legislators and agency leaders, and the exciting Bipartisan Bag-Off. Mark your calendars to join us for this great opportunity to connect with decision-makers and help amplify industry's voice on legislative priorities. The MGA encourages members to bring as many of their teams as possible to this important day. **SB**

MGA 2024 Membership - Renewal Packets Mailed

Your 2024 membership renewal packets have been mailed – one per member location. Included in the packets are important information for the beginning of the year, the updated 2024-2025 Business Regulations Guidebook, as well as MGA Foundation Scholarship and Carts to Careers information.



If you have not yet received your 2024 dues renewal packet, be sure to submit your payment to continue to receive all the cost-saving benefits being a part of the MGA entails. **Your membership expired on 12/31/23. KA**

Keep Your Team Updated in 2024

Do you have new members on your team? Be sure to provide us with any updates and changes to your company records so all team members are kept in the loop of regulatory updates and industry news. Also, please make sure your accounts receivable department has our current mailing address: 1360 Energy Park Drive, Suite 110, St. Paul, MN 55108. **KA**

MGA Online Checkout

The MGA's Online Checkout webinar series is an exclusive member-only benefit and consists of topical and relevant information ranging from regulatory compliance to industry trends that are critical to your everyday operations. These one-hour webinars are concise for our members and all past webinar recordings are available at www.mngrocers.com.



The 2024 MGA Legislative Session Preview will be the first MGA Online Checkout of 2024 on **Thursday, February 8** at 10:00 am. It will provide an in-depth look at the upcoming session and priority issues as well as a hands-on approach to engagement opportunities and the active role individuals play. Watch your emails for registration! **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 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. The application deadline for Spring Semester II (starts March 11) is **February 26**. See insert for more information. **KC**



MGA Meets with Commissioners

The MGA has been conducting annual meetings with commissioners of agencies that interact with industry. These consultations are a proactive strategy implemented by the MGA to foster strong relationships with leaders of these agencies and are invaluable to industry. Thus far, the MGA Government Relations team has met with commissioners and staff from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor and Industry, Department of Revenue, Department of Human Services, the MN Pollution Control Agency, the MN Lottery, and the new Director of the Paid Family & Medical Leave Department. **SB**



Summer EBT Program

The State of Minnesota has announced its intent to launch the permanent Summer EBT Program for Children. This program will officially begin this summer and will support more than 29 million children nationwide. It provides grocery-buying benefits of \$40 per child, per month, to low-income families. This benefit will ensure kids have consistent access to critical nutrition when school is out.



FMI Meetings

The MGA Government Relations Team joined their peers and industry partners at the Midwest Regional State Legislative Meeting hosted by The Food Industry Association (FMI). This was an excellent information-sharing opportunity that allowed industry organizations to learn from the governmental policies being pushed in other parts of the country. Regrettably, Jamie Pfuhl and Steve Barthel had a lot of information to share with their fellow GR cohorts and supplied an overview of the major policy advanced in Minnesota during the 2023 session. These included Paid Family & Medical Leave, Earned Sick & Safe Time, Organized Retail Crime, and environmental regulations. **SB**



Join Us at the 2024 NGA Show

The NGA Show is March 10–12 at the Caesars Forum Convention Center in Las Vegas, NV. The NGA Show brings together independent retailers and wholesalers, food retail industry executives, food/CPG manufacturers, and service providers for unparalleled opportunities to learn, engage, share, network, and innovate. The National Grocers Association will be hosting its 37 Annual Best Bagger Championship on **Monday, March 11**. Join us and help cheer on Marissa Schumacher from Kowalski's Market, Eagan as she represents Minnesota! Good Luck Marissa! **ST**



MGA Coupon Clearing House

REMINDER: The MGA Coupon Clearing House closed on **December 31**. The MGA will not accept coupons received after this date. For more information or options for future coupon processing, email mgainfo@mngrocers.com.

JOIN US

MGA Boards and Committees

Have you considered expanding your engagement with the MGA - join an MGA Board or Committee. Support leadership direction as we elevate and advance industry. The time commitment needed is minimal with an invaluable return. **JP**

MGA Share Groups

In an effort to foster collaboration and share knowledge between member companies, the MGA has established both a Human Resources and a Loss Prevention Share Group. These groups will meet periodically to share questions, experiences, and challenges that businesses in industry are facing. This is also an excellent opportunity for the MGA Government Relations Team to learn the areas of concern for MGA members and supply us with talking points and real-world examples that we can convey to legislators and state agencies. **SB**



WASHINGTON NEWS

Deja Vu – Federal Government Shutdown Looming

With a federal financing deadline looming in the new year, time is running out yet again for Congress to avert a government shutdown. In November, Congress passed a bipartisan stopgap funding bill, the second such temporary spending measure of the current fiscal year. Money for crucial government programs expires on Jan. 19, and money for the rest of the government runs out shortly after that, on Feb. 2. The House adjourned in mid-December and will not return to Washington until Jan. 9. This leaves just eight legislative days after this week to pass trillions of dollars of spending through both chambers.

House Passes Pharmacy Reform Bill

In December, the House of Representatives passed the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act by a vote of 320-71. Advocates have been pushing for the passage of the bill, which includes several provisions vital to lowering prescription drug costs and bringing transparency to anticompetitive practices of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs). The legislation represents clear progress in addressing the near stranglehold that PBMs have on the retail pharmacy industry. The bill will now move to the Senate, where it's expected to be a broader healthcare package that can be passed and then signed by the president.

Of particular significance to pharmacy members, the legislation includes the Drug Price Transparency in Medicaid Act, which bans the use of spread pricing in Medicaid while requiring fair and transparent reimbursements to pharmacies, and the PBM Accountability Act, which requires PBMs to provide data to employers revealing how much they pay for drugs, how much money they keep for themselves and what costs and savings get passed along to health plan sponsors (employers) and patients.

Menthol Ban Delayed

The Biden administration will, yet again, delay its ban on menthol cigarettes following pushback from retailers and consumers. Initially, the administration planned to finalize the rules in August 2023, then moved that timeline to January 2024. The administration is now expected to finalize the ban in March of 2024, but the process could continue to be delayed due to the pressure of it being an election year. Officials state that the rules will not target consumers, but instead, enforcement will focus on manufacturers, distributors and retailers, including convenience stores.

EBT Processing Fee

The Ensuring Fee-Free Benefit Transaction Act was included within the Farm Bill extension that passed late last year. This is a short-term victory, but a good sign that the provision will also be included in the full Farm Bill to be debated in 2024. Passage of the EBT Act would ensure that retailers are permanently protected from EBT processing fees and modernization costs.

White House Launches Council on Supply Chain Resiliency

President Biden recently announced the formation and convened the first meeting of the White House Council on Supply Chain Resiliency, a collective of federal agency and department heads tasked with working collaboratively on issues to strengthen America's supply chains. The launch of the Council was coupled with the unveiling of nearly 30 actions that the Biden-Harris Administration would take to strengthen supply chains critical to the economic and national security of the country.

Advertising Package - Get Noticed

Pages are filling up fast—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. All packages are customizable—we look forward to working with you this year! **KA**



MGA 2023 Annual Conference

Get ready for 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. 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. **KA**



MGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Madden's Resort
July 28 - 30, 2024

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There is still plenty of time to sponsor the 2023 MGA Annual Conference – sign up today **KA**

*12/15/2023



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January 1

MGA Membership Renewal Due

January 15 – March 15

MGAF Scholarship Program
MGA Program

February 12

MN Legislative Session Begins
St. Paul, MN

February 26

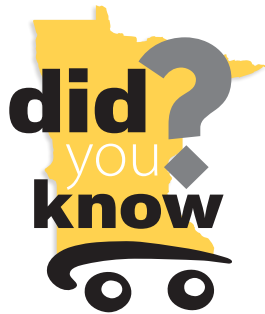
CTC Application Deadline
MGA Program

March 5

MGA Legislative Day
St. Paul, MN
MGA Program

April 16

MGA Champions Lunch
Eagan, MN
MGA Program



There are new materials for WeCard. Now that we are in the New Year, it is important that you and your employees are in compliance. The We Card Program is a valuable tool to educate and retrain employees. Make sure you have your 2024 materials and visit the We Card website at www.wecard.org to get the latest information. **SB**



You Asked it

Q. Where can I get a current All-In-One Employment Poster?

A: As a member-only benefit, the MGA has mailed an updated All-In-One Employment Poster which reflects the increase in the state's new minimum wage effective January 1 as well as all required labor postings. The poster must be displayed where all employees have easy access to the information, e.g., breakroom or employee lounge. Additional posters are available to purchase for a nominal fee. **ST**

Questions? Call MGA 1-800-966-8352



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