



frontline

The Official Monthly Publication of the Minnesota Grocers Association

February 2024

Legislative Session Begins

The legislature will gavel in the 2024 legislative session on February 12 and begin a 14-week sprint to their constitutionally required adjournment date of May 20. Democrats still maintain complete control over state government and all bills not passed during the first year of the biennium are still in play in 2024. With the last budget forecast showing that there is virtually no supplemental budget to work with, this session will focus largely on policy items and another bonding bill to fund infrastructure projects.

We anticipate discussion around environmental issues related to plastics, recycling, organic waste, as well as labor regulations, recordkeeping, and anti-trust/competition legislation. DFL Leadership has indicated that they plan to address potential issues that have been identified with some of the swiftly passed bills that were approved last session, including Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST), Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML), and the legalization of adult-use cannabis.

This year's shortened timeline will undoubtedly mean another fast-paced session where bills move quickly and debate and public testimony is severely limited. The MGA Government Relations team is ready to work and looks forward to finding opportunities to advance industry this year. We have been engaging key lawmakers and agency leaders to ensure that the priorities, policies, and concerns of industry are represented at the Capitol.

MGA Capitol Check Out Calls Begin ✓

Stay up to date on the information from the 2024 legislative session by joining 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. These calls are recorded to easily share with your team members. Mark your calendars for **February 16 at 9:00 am. SB**

We continue to raise concerns with major pieces of legislation that passed last session and discuss potential common-sense improvements with lawmakers and regulators. See the 2024 Legislative Express Preview insert for more information on issues we anticipate action on.

Another key factor for this session is that all 134 seats of the House of Representatives will be up for election in November 2024. During this session, you'll likely hear DFL leaders and Governor Walz highlight their successes from the last session as they begin their early pitch to voters, asking Minnesotans to allow Democrats to retain control of the House in the fall elections, which would continue their legislative trifecta until 2026.

Republicans will certainly ratchet up their rhetoric as adjournment nears and they test campaign messaging looking to convince voters to reject the policies passed by Democrats this biennium. The huge expansion in state government and labor mandates are sure to top their list of DFL offences. The GOP will be looking to take control of the House for the first time since 2019 and hope to serve as a constraint to the policies of the DFL.

For a successful session, the MGA will need engagement from all members. Hearing your concerns and challenges helps us paint an accurate picture for leaders. Consider joining us at the MGA Legislative Day on **March 5**. (See insert) Stay tuned for ways to support our collective efforts and answer the call if you receive it. **SB**

2024 Legislative Sponsors



Becoming an MGA Legislative Sponsor supports our efforts in advocating for industry in St. Paul. A legislative sponsorship is an investment in your business. Due to the support of our legislative sponsors, the MGA Government Relations team was recently able to purchase a new bill-tracking system that will be extremely valuable in our work and will be a benefit to the entire industry. This is one way that your sponsorship dollars go to work for you. Sponsors receive recognition throughout the year in all of our legislative updates, publications, and events. See insert. **SB**

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Membership Renewal Due

All MGA members have received their 2024 membership renewal invoices. Your MGA membership runs on a calendar year and **expired 12/31/2023**. Please submit your renewal today to continue to receive all the cost-saving benefits. **KA**

MGA Contact Key

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MGA 2024 Day on Hill – March 5

The MGA's annual Day on the Hill will take place on Tuesday, **March 5, 2024**. The day will include informational briefings from the MGA Government Relations team, meetings with legislators and agency leaders, and the exciting Bipartisan Bag-Off and legislative dinner. 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. See insert to register. **SB**

2024 Food PAC of MN Goal

We've closed the book on a successful 2023 fundraising year and are now raising the bar even higher for 2024. All 134 seats in the MN House of Representatives will be up for election this fall. This will be the only opportunity to RESTORE BALANCE to St. Paul until 2026. Because of the importance of this election cycle, we've raised our fundraising goal to **\$45,000 for 2024**. We need your continued support more than ever. Every dollar you contribute is used to advance industry and is vital to the work of the MGA Government Relations team. See insert to donate. **SB**



MGA Scholarships Available

Make sure your employees take advantage of the 2024 Minnesota Grocers Association Foundation (MGA) Scholarship Program that runs from **January 15 – March 15, 2024**. The MGA will be awarding **25 - \$2,000** scholarships in 2024. Promotional materials have been mailed in your 2024 membership renewal packets and are also available at www.mngrocers.com. **ST**



Keep Your Team Updated in 2024

Do you have new members on your team? Has someone retired? Be sure to provide us with current company contact information and any updates so all team members are kept in the loop of regulatory updates and industry news. **KA**

Supermarket Employee Appreciation Day

FMI proclaims **February 22**, Supermarket Employee Day – this is a nationwide, all-industry-supported time for the food industry to recognize employees at every level for the work they do feeding families and enriching lives. Visit <https://www.fmi.org/get-involved/supermarket-employee-day> to help celebrate your outstanding supermarket employees. **ST**



MGA Leadership Feedback

The MGA Board of Directors is holding its annual retreat in early April. Please submit feedback, a concern, or an issue that you would like the Board of Directors to address at the strategic planning meeting. Remember, the MGA is a member driven association and your input is valued. **JP**



Carts to Careers: Elevate Your Workforce

The Minnesota Grocers Association Foundation provides tuition support for classes completed for the specific purpose of furthering your grocery/convenience store employees' current career or making available to them other careers within your company. The Carts to Careers (CTC) program, through a State of Minnesota appropriation, provides tuition support for the Retail Management Certificate (RMC) program. This is an online, nationally recognized, industry-endorsed, 8-course education certificate offered by Alexandria Technical & Community College that is 100% online and typically completed in less than two years. The application deadline for Spring Semester II (starts March 11) is **February 26**. Sign up here: <https://form.jotform.com/92655469798178>. **KC**



MGA Meets with New PFML Director

In January, the MGA Government Relation team met with the recently hired director of the new Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) division, Greg Norfleet. Director Norfleet and key staff welcomed the opportunity to work with the MGA as they develop systems and procedures for this massive program. The rollout begins in 2024 with mandated wage reporting, while benefits and payroll taxes start in 2026. As we have done for the new Earned Sick and Safe Time requirements, the MGA is working proactively with agency staff to have industry questions and concerns addressed. **SB/JP**

Cheer on the National Best Bagger Championship

The National Grocers Association Show is March 10–12, 2024, at the Caesars Forum Convention Center in Las Vegas, NV. Cheer on Minnesota's own Best Bagger, Marissa Schumacher from Kowalski's Market, Eagan, as she represents the state at the NGA Best Bagger Championship on **Monday, March 11**. Good Luck Marissa! **ST**



Hemp-Derived Cannabinoid Registration

Minnesota requires any business that sells hemp-derived cannabinoid products (edibles, beverages, or topicals) directly to consumers to register with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Failure to register could result in a fine of up to \$10,000. The registration process is simple and done online at no cost to the business at www.health.state.mn.us/people/cannabis/edibles/index.html. **SB/JP**



Loss Prevention Share Group Hold First Meeting

Last month, the MGA Government Relations team convened the first industry Loss Prevention (LP) Share Group meeting. The LP Share Group is designed to give MGA member companies the opportunity to discuss trends, challenges, and successes with their peers. The group will also work to identify areas of state law that can be strengthened to help industry combat the issues of crime and employee/customer safety. If your company is interested in being included, please contact the MGA Government Relations team. **SB**

WASHINGTON NEWS

Federal Funding Can Kicked Again

Congressional leaders reached an agreement in mid-January on a short-term funding bill that averted a partial government shutdown. This marks the third stop-gap spending deal Congress has reached since September to keep the federal government operating. The continuing resolution (CR) funds the government programs through March 8, according to statements from House Speaker Mike Johnson (R - LA), Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D - NY), and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D - NY).

Democrats and Republicans have been far apart in budget negotiations, with Republicans seeking significant spending cuts. This CR maintains funding at the fiscal year 2023 level and is free of partisan policy changes. Several headline House conservatives have tried to force Speaker Johnson to change the top-line spending agreement, threatening him with potential removal from his speakership, but Johnson has not wavered on his deal with the Leaders of the Democratic-controlled Senate.

House Votes to Kill NLRB Joint-Employer Rule

The House of Representatives voted in January to overturn the National Labor Relations Board's Joint Employer Rule. Under the rule, employers may be found to have a joint employment relationship where the larger entity may be found liable for workers they don't employ and workplaces they don't have control over due to the vague "direct and indirect" control standard. This is largely a symbolic vote by the GOP House, as the White House said that President Biden would veto the resolution if it made it to his desk. It's unlikely the resolution will get that far in the Democratic-controlled Senate, but passing the resolution strengthens Republican hands in negotiations over government funding legislation.

PBM Reform Up to the Senate

Prior to Congress adjourning for the holidays, the House passed the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act (H.R. 5378) with a strong, bipartisan vote of 320-71. This major health care package addresses the practices of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), marking the first time PBM reforms have passed a full chamber of Congress. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D - NY) has maintained the Senate will vote on its own sweeping health care package featuring significant PBM reforms – and two upcoming deadlines to fund the government, which could potentially serve as vehicles for bipartisan policies to get across the finish line.

Credit Card Competition Act Update

The discussion in Washington, D.C. continues regarding the Credit Card Competition Act (CCCA). Swipe fees are up nearly 50 percent since the pandemic and cost the average American family over \$1,000 a year. Network routing competition from additional vendors, aside from just Visa and Mastercard, would help mitigate processing fees, saving retailers and consumers thousands of dollars. It is possible that the bill could be included in a larger funding bill. Watch for a potential Call to Action.

MGA Signs onto WOTC Letter

The MGA joined a letter of support for H.R. 6833, the Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is an important tax preference that has been utilized for nearly three decades to build workforces in local communities across the country. H.R. 6833 would make WOTC more effective in achieving the goals of providing job opportunities and on-the-job training for individuals, including eligible veterans, SNAP recipients, individuals with disabilities, second-chance workers, and long-term unemployed individuals so they can have a pathway to remaining in the workforce.

Minnesota Grocer Promotion - Get Noticed

Is your company launching a new product, service, or piece of equipment? Minnesota retailers are interested! The MGA is offering an exciting opportunity to showcase your company through our "Product Promo" section in the upcoming summer *Minnesota Grocer* magazine. Mention this article to get an image and 150 words for \$150 (what a bargain). Space is limited – get your spot today. **KA**



**2024 MGA
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
JULY 28-30, 2024
MADDEN'S RESORT,
BRAINERD, MN**

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. Watch for event registrations this spring. **KA**

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**as of 1/15/2024*

Sponsoring the Annual Conference elevates your company and shows your commitment to the food industry of Minnesota. There is still time to sponsor the 2024 MGA Annual Conference. Thank you to the above companies who have supported the MGA and are committed to industry. **KA**



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January 15 – March 15

MGAF Scholarship Program
MGA Program

February 12

MN Legislative Session Begins
St. Paul, MN

March 5

MGA Legislative Day
St. Paul, MN
MGA Program

March 10 – 12

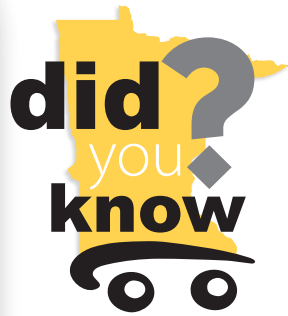
NGA Conference and
Best Bagger Competition
Las Vegas, NV

April 16 – 17

MGA Champions Lunch
Eagan, MN
MGA Program

May 28

MGA Foundation Golf Event
Oak Grove, MN
MGA Program



The MGA is your resource for fun and unique marketing opportunities. At the beginning of each quarter, the MGA emails the MGA Circular to all members. These updates provide simple marketing ideas and tools to expand your customer connections from tips on American Heart Month to Leap Day ideas. **KA**

You Asked it

Q. What is the updated IRS Mileage Reimbursement Rate?

A: The Internal Revenue Service has issued the 2024 standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical, or moving purposes. Beginning in 2024, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups, or panel trucks) will be **67 cents per mile** driven for business use - up 1.5 cents from 2023. **SB**

Questions? Call MGA 1-800-966-8352



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