Hello Texas Retailers!

2018 is off to a quick start and it’s hard to believe we are already in February. I hope your year is off to a good start as well. Your TRA team continues to work on planning our two signature member member events for this year: the TRA Advocacy Summit in late March and the annual TRA Retailers Forum in late July. We hope to see as many of you as possible at each event.

With 2018 being an election year it reminded me of the importance of maintaining relationships with your elected officials, at all levels. Certainly, TRA does this on behalf of all of you, our members, and we know that many of you do so as well, on behalf of your businesses and
individually. Recently, I was on a tour of one of our member’s distribution centers and it reinforced the value of activities like that, especially to elected officials. The truth is that a store, distribution center or facility tour for your elected officials can pay significant dividends, and it’s a very easy and basic way for you to highlight your store or business. It sounds so basic, but elected officials love having opportunities to tour a local store, business, or facility that operates in the area they represent. In fact, behind the scenes tours are even more effective with elected officials. We know many of you are already doing store and facility tours for your elected officials, but it’s really something all retailers should get in the habit of doing, as it makes your store’s or company’s story and what you do in an elected officials’ community real. Opportunities like facility tours, combined with the great advocacy you are already engaging in on behalf of our industry through personal visits, calls, emails and letters to your elected officials can truly be a winning formula. The bottom-line is that our stores, facilities and employees are our best resources, so showing them off is a great way to tell the story of retailers. If any of you need any assistance in putting together a store or facility tour for your elected officials, please don’t hesitate to contact the TRA team. Between our staff expertise and contacts, as well as those of some of your fellow members who have developed their own expertise in this area, we can help any TRA member pull off a great site visit for their elected officials.

As I noted last month, the 2018 elections will be one of the most impactful in Texas in almost two decades. Although, most of the top statewide elected officials will likely win reelection, there is expected to be quite a bite of turnover in the state legislature (including a new Speaker of the House), as well as within our Congressional delegation. Given that it will be such an important year electorally underscores the need for TRA to be active politically. We can only do that with your help, through your support of TRA's PACs (TRAPAC and TRA Fed-PAC), as well as to our general advocacy fund, the Retail Advocates Fund (RAF). Your support will help TRA support those candidates for state or federal elective office who understand the importance of and support Texas retail. TRA events such as the Advocacy Summit, March 23-25, will be a great opportunity for members of TRA and the retail industry in Texas to spend valuable time with key lawmakers from our state. Specifically, to discuss the most topical advocacy issues facing the retail industry and network with Texas’s most retail-friendly members of the Texas Legislature and Members of Congress.

The Texas Retailers Forum will be in Corpus Christi in 2018 and will take place at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, July 23-24. Our annual educational Forum, hosted by the Texas Retailers Association and the Texas Retail Education Foundation, will provide retailers with timely, topical and quality program sessions and speakers. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with retail industry leaders from across the state and country at networking functions such as our Awards Dinner, networking breaks, and our popular closing night casino party. Registration and sponsorship details and information about both great events is inside this newsletter. Make plans now to secure your company’s spot at these can’t miss events.

As always, thank you for supporting TRA and please feel free to reach out to the TRA team anytime.

Sincerely,
2018 Texas Retailers Advocacy Summit

TRA’s Advocacy Summit is a great opportunity to spend a weekend networking with Texas’s most retail-friendly Members of the Texas Legislature and Members of Congress. Registration includes access to all panels, speakers, and attendees, all receptions, meals/breaks, and networking opportunities.

Register for the Texas Retailers Advocacy Summit!

Book Your Hotel Room for Advocacy Summit!

Legislative Update
Early voting for the March 6th primaries begins in just a few days on February 20th 2018, so things are really heating up on the campaign trail. Two primary races drew TRA endorsements this month.

First, TRA Board member, State Representative John Raney, received our endorsement last week in the crowded primary race for his seat in Bryan/College Station. His leadership on retail issues has been invaluable and we appreciate his dedication to our industry.

George’s Statement on endorsing State Representative John Raney for HD14
“Representative Raney has been a member of TRA for almost 40 years and has fought tirelessly for our industry since elected to office. Representative Raney has shown great leadership both within TRA and while representing House District 14 and we are privileged to have him in the Legislature. TRA and its members know his efforts will continue to help keep Texas retail friendly and we gladly extend our endorsement to his campaign.” – George Kelemen, President and CEO – Texas Retailers Association

TRA’s second primary endorsement was for Trey Blocker who is challenging sitting Agriculture Commissioner, Sid Miller. Trey has a proven track record and has also taken the time to sit down with TRA members and hear their concerns and share his vision for the agriculture agency. He understands the fee increases our industry faced in the last few years were both unnecessarily high and rushed. He has pledged to work with our industry to not only lower those fees to the appropriate levels, but also listen to retailers to determine how changes to the agency’s regulation of retailers would impact the industry and state.

George’s Statement on endorsing Trey Blocker for Agriculture Commissioner
“We believe Trey Blocker understands the importance of retailers to the Texas economy, as well as to the communities they serve across the state. He also understands that the state’s regulatory agencies should work cooperatively with Texas businesses for the benefit of all involved. As a result, TRA supports Trey Blocker for Texas Agriculture Commissioner because we believe he is the best choice to lead TDA and help keep Texas Retail Friendly.”

Last, but certainly not least, TRA has been working with many of you, and our association colleagues on the City of Austin’s Mandatory Paid Sick Leave Policy. As of today, there are two different proposals being considered and both would have negative impacts on retailers in Austin. Not only do the plans themselves have significant issues, but the way in which the city council has rushed the ordnance through the process concerns us as well. For instance, the first draft was
released on January 18, 2018 and a final vote was held less than a month later on February 15th. Additionally, there has been no creditable fiscal or economic impact studies done to inform the council, citizens and retailers what this would cost our community. While this ordnance is on a fast track to be implemented in Austin, we have already gained support for state wide legislation to preempt this practice when the State Legislature convenes in January 2019. TRA will continue to monitor this issue closely and stand ready to assist any of you who do business in Austin with the ordinance. This issue will also be high on our legislative priority list as we move into the 86th Legislature.

Jim Sheer
VP of Government & Regulatory Affairs

TRA and TRAPAC need your support today! TRA is poised to jump into races that are critically important to the retail industry. With your help TRAPAC and TRA FedPAC will work to make sure retail friendly candidates have the support they need and our industry continues to grow and flourish across Texas. Click here to donate to the Texas Retailers Association PAC!

Member Spotlight:
Lowe's Home Improvement

Before Hurricane Harvey struck, employees at Lowe's Emergency Command Center in Wilkesboro, North Carolina and Mooresville headquarters worked around the clock to get critical supplies to Texas stores.

In the days and weeks following, Lowe's opened its stores' doors to residents and first responders, providing hot meals and places to sleep. The company donated $500,000 to American Red Cross Disaster Relief and donated more than 25,000 blue buckets filled with critically needed clean up supplies.

Lowe's teams in Houston continue to support customers in the rebuilding process. The company surprised more than 85 families in Spring, Texas with a pop-up store in November. The store provided a wide range of products needed to help families rebuild – from paint and tools to appliances and home décor.
The UpSkill Project, an initiative powered by Lowe’s to help customers improve DIY skills, also offered free, hands-on workshops to the Houston community in December.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner recently presented a proclamation declaring January 23 as Lowe’s Day. It was the city’s way of saying “thank you” following Lowe’s response to Hurricane Harvey.

The company also lent a hand to hundreds of employees and family members through the Lowe’s Employee Relief Fund. The fund provides support to employees and their immediate family members who have suffered a significant, unforeseen financial hardship.

In addition, Lowe’s recently announced plans to enhance benefits, including expanded maternity and parental leave as well as adoption assistance. The company will also offer a one-time bonus up to $1,000 for its more than 260,000 hourly employees.

Lowe’s has 143 stores and three distribution facilities in Texas. In 2017, Lowe’s contributed nearly $2.4 million and more than 18,800 volunteer hours to support local communities in Texas.

Learn More: [https://www.lowes.com/](https://www.lowes.com/)

2018 Texas Retailers Education Foundation (TREF) Golf Tournament
Texas Retailers Forum

The Texas Retailers Forum is at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel July 22-23, 2018. Our 2018 educational Forum, hosted by the Texas Retailers Association and the Texas Retail Education Foundation, provides retailers with timely, topical and quality program sessions and speakers. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with hundreds of retail industry leaders from across the state at networking functions such as our Awards Dinner, networking breaks, and a closing night party - aboard the U.S.S. Lexington.

Register for the Texas Retailers Forum!
Join the Texas Retailers Association and TRA Partner Tax Advisors Group for a conference call!

**Date & Time**: March 8, 2018 - 10:30AM-11:30AM  
**Conference Call Line**: 1-972-497-2499  
**Conference Code**: 399047  
**Presenter**: Lynn Krebs PhD CMI, Tax Advisors Group President and CEO

**Significantly Minimizing Business Personal Property Taxes – Improving the Bottom Line**

How do you determine the market value of depreciable assets? There are three generally accepted methods to determining value. So, why do most tax appraisers only consider one approach? What if that approach usually yields values that are significantly higher than market value? First, we will review the most common method of assessing business personal property (a simplified cost approach). Then we will look at what is considered by most independent appraisers as the most reliable approach to valuing used assets, the direct market or sales approach. Finally, we will compare and contrast these methods, identify pros and cons, and recommend a powerful blended approach, which often results in certified assessed values that are 25% to 35% less than the most common method used by tax assessors.

[Learn more about Lynn Krebs PhD CMI and Tax Advisors Group](#)  

Please RSVP to Justin Williamson at jwilliamson@txretailers.org!
It is my pleasure to invite you and your colleagues to the 97th Annual WAFC Convention, May 5-9, 2018 at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country in San Antonio, Texas.

The WAFC’s mission is “Advancing the Food Industry Through Education and Leadership” and we look forward to bringing that mission to life in San Antonio. The WAFC convention, widely anticipated as the best industry event of the year, brings together top executives from companies of all sectors of the food industry. I do hope that you will attend and take advantage of the opportunity to learn, network and conduct business, while enjoying all that the Texas Hill Country has to offer.

Special thanks to our convention partners, the Illuminators, led by Headlite, Mark Olejnik, who promises to greet and serve our delegates in a manner “second to none.” Renee and I look forward to seeing you in May in San Antonio!

Sincerely,

Mike Stigers
President & Chairman, WAFC

Learn More about the 97th Annual WAFC Convention!

NEW TREF Website Page

The Texas Retailers Association is currently building a new website page for the Texas Retailers Education Foundation. This new page will include a “Retail Job Center” for high school and college students to find retail jobs in their area. Members interested in having their job website pages linked should email Justin Williamson at jwilliamson@txretailers.org.

FedEx Small Business Grant

Here’s your chance at a $25,000 grant for your small business!

The FedEx Small Business Grant Contest is accepting entries from February 20 to March 28. Is your entry ready? This is a great chance to win one of 10 grants that could change the future of
your business.

Start thinking about how you want to tell your story: What do you want to share about your business? And what could a grant help you accomplish? Submit your story for a chance to win one of these prize packages:

- **Grand prize**: One winner of $25,000, plus $7,500 in FedEx Office® print and business services
- **Silver prize**: One winner of $15,000, plus $5,000 in FedEx Office print and business services
- **Bronze prize**: Eight winners of $7,500, plus $1,000 in FedEx Office print and business services

**Enter in 4 Easy Steps**

1. **Write a short profile**. Include why you started your business, a description of your product or service, and what makes your business stand out.
2. **Gather photos and a logo**. Highlight the best parts of your business through photos.
3. **Create a one-minute “elevator pitch” video** that describes your business.
4. **Share your profile with fans** during the voting period from February 28 to April 4. Their votes may help get you noticed and are only one of the many factors considered when choosing finalists and winners.

**Voting rules alert**: Buying votes from anyone, or giving discounts or gifts in exchange for votes, is strictly prohibited. Any entrant in violation of these rules will be disqualified.

[Learn More!](#)

**See How FedEx Helps Small Businesses Every Day**

You don’t have to enter a contest to enjoy savings of up to 27%* on FedEx® shipping: Just sign up for the TRA Shipping Program, managed by PartnerShip®. It’s simple to enroll, and there’s no cost and no minimum shipping requirement. [Sign up here](#) or call PartnerShip at 800-599-2902.

*Includes a bonus 5% online processing discount. Full details available at www.PartnerShip.com/01tra/FedExdiscounts.

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**Grocers Corner - In the Cart**
Texas WIC Vendor Agreement

Texas WIC has sent out re-authorization packets for those WIC Vendors whose Vendor Contracts will expire September 30, 2018. Approximately one third of the Texas Vendor Community must go thru re-authorization each year. These reauthorization packets must be completed and returned by May 1, 2018. It’s recommend you set a deadline of March 15th if you are one of the WIC Vendors that your contract expires September 30, 2018. Please click here to review the information from Texas WIC regarding the contract renewals and what items are required to be submitted.

FDA Launches New FSMA, Produce Safety Rule Webpages to Provide Information on the Food Safety Modernization Act

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has launched a new FSMA landing page on FDA.gov to help stakeholders more easily access information and resources about the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act to help them comply the rules.

In addition, FDA has also updated the Produce Safety Rule page with the most current information on the rule’s requirements, compliance dates, training, technical assistance, and other resources. This marks the first major compliance date for large farms (other than sprout growers) under the Produce Safety Rule. However, in September 2017, FDA announced that routine inspections under the rule would be postponed until Spring 2019 to allow time during this upcoming year for additional education, outreach, and training.

The Produce Safety Rule mandated by the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) establishes, for the first time, science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce grown for human consumption; marking a fundamental shift from reacting to food safety problems to preventing them before they occur.
These updates are part of FDA's commitment to ensuring that farmers, and other food producers, have the information and resources they need to comply with the new FSMA standards. FDA will continue to make information available to help stakeholders comply with the various FSMA requirements. Those interested should subscribe to the CFSAN Constituent Update and Food Safety Modernization Act email lists for the most up-to-date information.

**NLRB Asks for Comments on Ambush Election Rule**

The National Labor Relations Board has published a request for information regarding the “ambush” election rule that has been in place since 2015. The rule was designed to shorten the necessary time in between the filing of a petition to unionize, and the actual election itself. The rule has been effective, taking the average time in between filing and election down from nearly 40 days, to approximately 28. National Grocers Association (NGA) will be commenting on the rule, and in order to respond properly with accurate information to the NLRB request that all grocers take a few minutes of their time to provide NGA with information on how the rule has impacted their business by taking this survey.

**NCWM Again Adds Tare On Receipts to Annual Meeting for Vote**

Item SCL-7 S.1.8.5. was just voted out of the National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) Specifications and Tolerances Committee (S&T) and is moved forward as a voting item at the 2018 NCWM Annual meeting, for a second year in a row.

This Item requires front-end equipment, purchased after 2020, to have the ability to print the tare on the register receipt for each item weighed on the front end scale, at the point of sale. Examples of this are all produce, salad bar items, bulk coffee, bulk nuts, bulk cereal, bulk candy, etc.

Last year at the 2017 Annual Meeting, this item was narrowly defeated. The only way this proposal was defeated the first time was by many grocers and their Associations contacting their state weights and measures department (in Texas it is under Texas Department of Agriculture) and explained the enormous costs associated with the costs to implement this process and when it is completely unnecessary. The NCWM had the following comments submitted, in addition to FMI’s, published in the meeting materials for the Interim meeting: Florida Grocers Association, North Carolina Retail Merchants Association and South Carolina Retail Association.

It is now critical you reach out to our state Weights & Measures Director (Stuart Strnad-Director for Consumer Product Protection- TDA (Texas Department of Agriculture) at 512-463-5706 or stuart.strnad@texasagriculture.gov) let them him that this is an extremely expensive ask of retailers, and that he (TDA) should vote no on this item at the 2018 Annual Meeting (Tulsa, Oklahoma, July 15-19, 2018). Enclosed is sample draft of comments you may want to use as guide to comment to TDA. Please click here to review the draft note.

**Save the Dates**

**Texas WIC Quarterly Vendor Meeting Webinar**

- February 22, 2018 2:00PM - 3:00PM
SNAP Program Statistics Update

Most current SNAP Program numbers posted by the state are now moving back toward trends we were experiencing prior to Hurricane Harvey. The nation had for several months showed approximately a .05% decline in participation with similar showing in benefits dollars. Texas had begun to experience a trend toward a decline when the storm hit. September-October showed strong increases in participation and in benefits with the 37 TX Counties declared disaster areas impacted by Harvey. The increase in families added to SNAP as well as the additional benefits added into those counties as well as in Florida after their September Hurricane event, changed the national numbers from a decline in participation and benefits for those two months and actually the nation as a whole showed an increase over the prior year for those two months. But when you looked at individual state participation numbers, the real story came out. Most of the nation was experiencing a decline in SNAP Program participation and benefit dollars reflected similar decline as most regions of the country were experiencing an increase in available jobs thus a drop in unemployment which meant a decline in the number of folks applying for SNAP Benefits. November numbers nationally are showing that general decline in participation in both SNAP and WIC Programs.

Please contact Joe Williams: jwilliams@txretailers.org or 936-258-3414 if you have any questions regarding the statistics update.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Participates</th>
<th>Dollars</th>
<th>Ave per Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 17</td>
<td>1,675,354</td>
<td>3,931,594</td>
<td>$446,920,844.00</td>
<td>$267.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>1,616,171</td>
<td>3,657,566</td>
<td>$41,719,666.00</td>
<td>$258.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Twelve Month Rolling Average - Feb 17-Jan 18**

1,659,777       3,891,852       $436,306,897.00            $263.00

**Look Back To Last Year (2017) at This Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Participates</th>
<th>Dollars</th>
<th>Ave per Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>1,630,846</td>
<td>3,847,537</td>
<td>$442,386,110.00</td>
<td>$271.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>1,623,926</td>
<td>3,831,106</td>
<td>$437,666,684.00</td>
<td>$270.00</td>
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How do we compare on the SNAP Program participation to our neighbors and nation-wide. The latest numbers available are Nov17 compared to Nov16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Participates</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>&lt;03.6%&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;-2.4%&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;-1.5%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>+0.9%</td>
<td>+1.5%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>&lt;-1.7%</td>
<td>+0.5%</td>
<td>&lt;-6.2%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>&lt;-3.2%</td>
<td>&lt;-2.0%</td>
<td>&lt;-3.6%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>&lt;-6.9%</td>
<td>&lt;-6.6%</td>
<td>&lt;-9.4%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>&lt;-4.0%</td>
<td>&lt;-3.8%</td>
<td>&lt;5.5%&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do we compare on WIC Program participation tour neighbors and nation-wide? The latest numbers available are Nov 17 compared to Nov 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>&lt;-05.7%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>&lt;-7.4%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>&lt;-3.0%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas-</td>
<td>&lt;2.0%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>&lt;-6.1%&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>&lt;3.8%&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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About the Texas Retailers Association

The Texas Retailers Association (TRA) is a 501(c) 6 non-profit organization dedicated to keeping Texas “retail friendly” for business owners through legislative advocacy. Since 1926, our diverse membership has represented every segment of the retail industry throughout Texas — from the smallest neighborhood store to the largest corporate chain. Recognized as the Voice of Texas Retail, TRA effectively advocates for Texas retailers at the State and Federal level while providing value-added services and partner programs for its members. Visit www.txretailers.org and join today!

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*TRA Members

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