



## TRA NEWSLETTER

News affecting Retailers & Grocers in Texas Industry

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### Texas Retailers Newsletter: April 2019



Hello Texas Retailers:

We have made it to April, and the first few weeks have been very busy for TRA, with the rest of the month promising much more of the same. The 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative session has roughly a month and a half to go and will soon be approaching key deadline dates, that will determine which bills continue to advance and which don't. Additionally, TRA's signature event during the legislative session, our biannual Texas Retailers Lobby Day at the Texas Capitol was a big success on March 20<sup>th</sup>. Read below for a recap on Lobby Day, recent movement on a key retailer priority at the federal level, and upcoming activities such as the annual TREF golf tournament, and the TRA Forum.

The TRA team continues to keep TRA's legislative priorities front and center this session. On March 20<sup>th</sup> we were joined by a great group of our members, representing every sector within retail, for TRA's Lobby Day. TRA Lobby Day participants walked the halls of the Texas Capitol and met with close to 100 members of the Texas Legislature on topics of importance to the retail community, including: taxes; wage & labor issues; issues related to the implementation of the Wayfair decision in Texas; and SNAP. [Click here to see the recap of TRA's Lobby Day.](#)

Specifically related to SNAP, our ongoing work to broaden the distribution schedule for SNAP benefits from 15 days to 28 days during the month is moving along nicely. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, less than a week after Lobby Day, HB 1218 was passed by the Texas House. This is great news and now this issue moves to the Texas Senate. Additionally, our fight to reduce or eliminate the outdated inventory tax on property, as well as the fight against burdensome wage and labor laws and ordinances continue to work their way through the legislative process.

Even if you missed Lobby Day and can't get to Austin before the end of May, you can still help our cause at the Legislature. [Click here to see our top priorities and the bills associated with them.](#) Contact your legislators and tell them you're a TRA member and a retailer in Texas and let them know where you stand on these key issues. We also need your help at the federal level, as we finally have positive movement on addressing the "retail glitch," through bipartisan bills that have been filed in both the U.S. House and Senate. [Click here to learn more and see how you can help by contacting your member of Congress.](#)

Lastly, registration for the annual Texas Retailers Forum is now open and in full swing. Join us this summer, here in Austin at the Omni Barton Creek Resort on July 29<sup>th</sup> for our annual industry showcase event, which will provide retailers with timely, topical and quality sessions and speakers. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with and learn from retail industry leaders from across the state and country. Make plans to be there to help us honor our Federal Legislative Champion for 2019,

Congressman Will Hurd, as well as state legislative champions and industry champions at networking functions such as our Awards Dinner, networking breaks, and our popular closing night party. Registration and sponsorship details, as well as information about Forum is inside this newsletter. Secure your spot at this can't miss retail industry event.

As always, thank you for supporting TRA.

Sincerely,



President/CEO  
Texas Retailers Association

## Legislative Update



With just over 40 days left in the Texas Legislative Session things in the pink building are rolling along at full steam ahead! House and Senate Committees are meeting daily with extensive agendas only interrupted by their work on the floor of each chamber where legislation is further debated and refined. This month has been a whirlwind for several major efforts and the Legislature is slowly but surely checking off its priorities having both the state's \$200 billion budget and public education financing plans well on their way to completion. Most recently, both chambers moved forward on the much discussed property tax relief and reform plan. HB2 and SB2 will meet up soon in the legislative process to consolidate differences and hopefully provide citizens and business across Texas meaningful tax relief. While any relief on our property taxes is a welcome sight, it does not come without a cost elsewhere. Governor Greg Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and House Speaker Dennis Bonnen announced their support of an increase in the state sales tax if the additional revenue would buy down property tax rates across the state. While the 1 cent increase has not been approved as of today, their support will play a significant role in the future of the proposal. The increase would need to be approved by 2/3 of both legislative bodies then be sent to the voters in a constitutional amendment election to be held later this year. This will likely be one of the last major issues resolved before the end of session on May 27th.

TRA continues to be involved in a number of very significant issues that could have both positive and negative impacts on our industry. TRA has testified for and against a number of bills and continues to work with legislative offices and elected officials to provide industry insight and make their bills better for Texas Retail.

For more information on the legislative process, TRA's priority bills and news from the Capitol, please join us weekly for the TRA Tax and Legislative Conference Call on Thursdays at 2:00 PM CT.

## Texas Retailers 86th Legislative Session Priorities

The Texas Retailers Association (TRA) has prepared legislative priorities for the 86th Texas Legislature. Collectively, TRA represents more than 320,000 retail establishments and over 3.5 million jobs across the state. The association supports all levels of Texas retail including grocery stores, chains and single location small businesses.

TRA's goal is to keep Texas "retail-friendly" and ensure that legislative action is taken to protect business owners so that they can continue to employ hardworking Texans and serve communities across the great state of Texas.

- **TRA supports a business-friendly regulatory environment.** TRA member companies are regulated, licensed, inspected, and taxed by agencies in Texas and appreciate the Legislature's efforts to continue to make Texas retail friendly. TRA supports regulation that is reasonable and that allows our members to continue to provide excellent customer service, top quality products and continued business success in the retail industry. TRA appreciates the various approaches our membership takes to providing these services and supports their efforts to make those choices independently without unnecessary regulatory burdens imposed by either the state or local governments. Additionally, in light of, the *South Dakota v. Wayfair* decision by the United States Supreme Court, TRA and its member-companies look forward to continuing work with our state's elected officials to implement any legislation, rules, and regulations in a way that reflects the spirit of the level playing field for all retailers envisioned by the Court's ruling.

- **TRA supports Texas customers and communities.** All TRA members provide the best service to all of their customers and communities and do so in a variety of ways. Whether providing food, clothing and essential supplies during the recent hurricanes, flooding and other natural disasters or providing school supplies and medication to those in need across the state, TRA's members go above and beyond to support the customers that support their businesses. Our members coordinate closely with local, state and federal authorities in efforts to make sure our communities thrive throughout the year.

- **TRA supports property tax relief.** Retailers across Texas are subject to increasingly higher and higher property taxes, not only on their retail space but also on the inventories on their shelves. Texas business property taxes continue to serve as a significant disadvantage to the retail industry in our state. Inventory taxes stacked on top of ever rising taxes being assessed on our buildings drive costs up for our businesses and ultimately the customers we serve. Retail property across the state is unique in its position in the market and we support a regulatory framework that allows for accurate and fair valuation of that property.

#### **86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION PRIORITIES:**

- **LOCAL EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE PRE-EMPTION** - TRA will support passing statewide legislation that would preempt local governments from unilaterally enacting negative local employment and labor laws mandating employer benefits, employer hiring practices, scheduling, and other daily operational business practices.

- **INVENTORY TAX RELIEF** - TRA supports inventory property tax relief and repeal. Texas is one of only a handful of states that allows local property taxes to be assessed on retail inventories. Those other states are not states with whom Texas normally competes for new business and economic development opportunities. Additionally, inventory property tax relief is not selective, it benefits large and small businesses equally and attracts greater investment in the Texas economy.

- **SNAP DISTRIBUTION SCHEDULE** – Many TRA members participate in the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) and want to do so as effectively and efficiently as possible to maximize customer experiences. Insuring product availability to our customers while also allowing retailers to manage employees and inventories is essential in this process. To do so, TRA will advocate to broaden the SNAP distribution schedule from its current 15 days to 28 days. This will provide both customers and businesses with a more even and predictable shopping experiences across the state.

### **ASSET**



**Asset Update:**

Senate Bill 15 has passed the Senate State Affairs Committee is currently waiting to be taken up by the full Senate. House Bill 1654 has been referred to the House State Affairs Committee and is waiting on a hearing date. We will continue to keep members updated on ASSET and the consistent employment regulations bills that have been filed.

**Information on ASSET:**

ASSET is a non-profit coalition of job creation organizations that fights for policies that fuel the engines of our economy and protect Texas businesses from invasive and burdensome government regulations. ASSET collectively represents millions of employers and employees in the Lone Star State who believe employment and business operational decisions are best left to private employers, not government. To learn more about ASSET and its mission [click here](#) or visit [www.ASSETtexas.com](http://www.ASSETtexas.com).

**Texas Retail Lobby Day**



On Wednesday, March 20th, the Texas Retailers Association held their biennial Texas Retailers Lobby Day. Members of the Texas Retailers Association visited Austin, Texas to meet with Members of the Texas Legislature about the issues that affect the retail industry. Attendees started their day with breakfast, a briefing on the major issues, and a lesson on “How to Lobby.” After being bused over to the State Capitol, retailers walked the halls, meeting with key legislators and their staff about SNAP Distribution, Wayfair, consistent employment regulations, and other issues that concern retailers and grocers. Members of TRA’s Executive Committee met with Governor Greg Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and Speaker Dennis Bonnen. Attendees were encouraged to meet with their Representative and Senator as well. [Click here to view some of the highlights from Texas Retailers Lobby Day 2019!](#)

Thank you to all who attended! If you attended and have not already taken the attendee survey, [please do so here](#). Surveys help us continue to make future TRA events the best they can be!

**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!**

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please reach out to [jwilliamson@txretailers.org](mailto:jwilliamson@txretailers.org)



## TREF Golf Tournament



[Register today for the 2019 TREF Golf Tournament!](#) It will be held May 3, 2019 at Wildcat Golf Course in Houston, TX. You won't want to miss out and help make available educational opportunities through programs, seminars, partnerships and scholarships for the next generation of retail professionals in Texas. This year we will have Rescue Bags available for purchase! These bags will include 3 raffle tickets, 2 mulligans (limit 1 mulligan per 9 holes), a ticket for the ball cannon, and a 5 foot putting string! A rescue bag will be available for purchase at the tournament for \$50!

The schedule is as follows:

7:00AM Breakfast and Driving Range Opens

7:15AM Registration Opens

8:30AM Shotgun Start

Individual Golfer: \$185

- Green Fee
- Cart Fee
- Range Balls
- Breakfast and Lunch for one golfer

Golf Foursome: \$700

- Green Fee
- Cart Fee
- Range Balls
- Breakfast and Lunch for four golfers

Wildcat Golf Club  
12000 Almeda Rd  
Houston, TX 77045

## 2019 Texas Retailers Forum



# HONORING WILL HURD

Federal Legislative Champion

## 2019 TEXAS RETAILERS FORUM

July 29th at the Omni Barton  
Creek in Austin, TX

The 2019 Texas Retailers Forum will be held at the Omni Barton Creek on July 29th, 2019 in Austin, TX. The Texas Retailers Forum will be one full day of breakout sessions, educational panels, and an awards dinner. We will also be honoring Representative Will Hurd as the Federal Legislative Champion. The Texas Retailers are very excited for our annual conference and hope you can join!

Registration for members is \$350 and non-members is \$700. This includes all meals, educational opportunities, breakout sessions, and your tickets to the dinner and closing night party. [Click here to register today!](#)

### Member Spotlight: Pepsico



# PEPSICO

This month's member spotlight goes to Pepsico. Pepsico partnered up with Feeding American and is providing more than one billion healthy servings to U.S. families by 2025. This past week they had hundreds of employees volunteer at 55 different food banks across the country. One that is being featured is a team that volunteered in Fort Worth, TX. [Click here to see the video.](#) Keep up the good work Pepsico!

### [Emergency Preparation Supplies Sales Tax Holiday: April 27-29](#)

You can purchase certain emergency preparation supplies tax free during the [2019 Emergency Preparation Supplies Sales Tax Holiday](#). There is no limit on the number of qualifying items you can purchase, and you do not need to issue an exemption certificate to claim the exemption. This year's holiday begins at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, April 27, and ends at midnight on Monday, April 29. [Click here for more detailed information.](#)

## Plastic Container Theft Task Force



The Texas Retailers Association launched the Operation S.T.O.P.P. initiative in 2013 in Houston, TX in response to the overwhelming plastic container losses our retail members report each year. Plastic crate theft is considered a felony and our mission is to recover crates and stop this organized crime.

When you opt in to the Plastic Container Theft Task Force, you have a very high chance of getting your plastic crates and containers back. This program is designed specifically for retailers who are victims of plastic container theft and who want to save money by recovering their stolen property. If your company wants to acquire stolen goods back or wants to help prevent future organized retail crime, [please click here for details on opting-in](#) to the Plastic Container Theft Task Force.

### TRA-Endorsed Energy Solutions Provider: Amerex Energy Services



A TRA-endorsed service provider since 2002, Amerex is the largest OTC(wholesale) natural gas, electricity and emissions trader in North America. Their real-time involvement in the wholesale energy market and their customized service has consistently yielded significant cost savings to TRA members. [Click Here to Learn More](#)

Contact: Brandi Peck, [bpeck@amerexenergy.com](mailto:bpeck@amerexenergy.com), 281.340.5308  
[www.amerexenergyservices.com](http://www.amerexenergyservices.com)

[Click Here to Learn More!](#)

## Grocers Corner- In the Cart



### WIC/SNAP Program Statistics Update

Both the SNAP and WIC technology with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) has been working well. Our industry has experienced no major outages in the recent past. A EBT-4 Scheduled Maintenance is scheduled for 4/23 at 3:00AM. The anticipated time frame is 1 hour.

SNAP redemptions in Feb 2019 were \$239.9 million. Remember there was an early release of benefits in Jan. 2019. The 6 month average is \$411.5 million/month in benefits.

SNAP retailers in the State: 19,788

WIC redemptions Jan. 2019 \$35 million

Participants: 675,233 Retail outlets: 2085

An interesting fact: WIC customers redeem 39,000 gallons of milk everyday.

Calls to the Help Desk:

Clients: 5.4 million/month average last 6 months

Retailers: 37,000/month average last 6 months

### Master of Science Food Industry Leadership Program

The Marshall School at USC has openings for its Master of Science, Food Industry Leadership program. Many current food industry executives have completed this outstanding course. It is ideal for food industry leaders looking to rise to the next level in their careers.

- Primarily online with two weeks on campus in Southern California
- Complete the course in 16 months

For information: [www.marshall.usc.edu](http://www.marshall.usc.edu)

### RFG Study: Online Interactions With Supermarkets Continues to Rise

The Retail Feedback Group (RFG), a provider of actionable stakeholder feedback, found in its most recent study that shoppers



are interacting with their supermarket in various ways. The 2019 U.S. Supermarket Digital & Social Engagement Study is based on a nationally representative study of 1,200 supermarket shoppers. [Click here to continue reading](#)



**Same FedEx Service. Lower Cost.**



If you could get the same service from FedEx that you do today, but for a lower cost, wouldn't you jump at the opportunity? Through the **TRA Shipping Program**, you can. When you enroll for this free TRA member benefit, you can ship FedEx the same way you do today. The only difference you'll notice will be the positive impact on your bottom line. Enroll today **to save up to 27%\* on select FedEx services**. Visit [www.PartnerShip.com/01tra](http://www.PartnerShip.com/01tra) for complete program details. If you have any questions call 800-599-2902 or email [sales@PartnerShip.com](mailto:sales@PartnerShip.com).

#### **Your FedEx and UPS Shipments Will Be More Expensive in 2019**

FedEx and UPS rates are going up in 2019, and it's more important than ever that TRA members know how to mitigate the impact to their business. PartnerShip®, the benefit provider that manages the [TRA Shipping Program](#), has analyzed the new rate charts so TRA members can accurately prepare for the year ahead. [Download the free white paper](#) to see a break down of where you'll find the highest increases and get a simplified explanation of the complicated changes you need to be aware of.

**Click Here to Learn More!**

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