PRARA NEWS

ESTABLISHED 1937 September 2020

IN THIS ISSUE...

Monthly Columns

Articles of Interest

EMERGENCY SPILL KIT

$39.95

Kit contains:

5lb. Lite Dry

2 48” socks

8 absorbent pads

2 pair gloves

2 hazardous waste bags

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Full page	**$900**
1/2 page	**$600**
1/4 page	**$450**
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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

BY: DENNIS BUDZYNSKI

Hello fellow members,
At our last board meeting there were a lot of discussions of how our association could help our members. The c-store directors were interested in the fact that our major chain stores are now selling beer and wine and they feel this is something that must change. We believe the time is right to make our voice heard and to take on the PA Liquor Control Board. After several discussions, the board come with up a strategy and invited our association's attorney to sit down with us. We explored how we can move forward. We think that the time is right to have this law changed and level the beer and wine playing field. After all, we are entrusted and licensed to sell cigarettes, lottery, and explosive gasoline.

We know we are an important and essential member of the community we serve and live in. The recent covid-19 has shown the part of the PA LCB requirement to serve food and seating for 30 customers are not being practiced and should be removed now! In the next few weeks you will be receiving information as we work with our legal team to develop a course of action. I am sure this time we have a decent opportunity to make this happen. We will keep you updated.

LABOR DAY

Convenience Stores Are Poised to Play a Leading Role in Economic Recovery

Convenience Store News
August 24, 2020

NATIONAL REPORT — This year is turning out to be like no other. As the COVID-19 pandemic keeps its grip on the United States, many are looking for a return to normalcy.

In his keynote presentation at the Conexxus 2020 Annual Education and Strategy Conference, Gene Marks, owner and operator of Marks Group PC, said in his 25 years of running a business, he has never seen such an unprecedented amount of uncertainty. Mix in an election — the entire U.S. House of Representatives, one-third of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. presidency — and you end up with a lot of question marks.

Still, retail businesses have a responsibility to their customers, their suppliers and their employees to make the right decisions. To that end, data and metrics are helpful in determining investments and making hiring plans around them.

"As a business owner, you have to know these things, so you can make your plans going forward," Marks said, explaining that some of the key metrics he follows are restaurant reservations through OpenTable's State of the Industry index, travel passenger numbers through the Transportation Security Administration, purchasing decisions through the Institute of Supply Management, and the metrics of the National Federation of Independent Business' Small Business Index.

"You have to have your index, your metric — a good three, four or five ones," Marks said, noting that he follows seven. "You have to know as an owner of a business where the economy is going, so you can time your investments and hiring."

ON THE FRONT LINES

When and how the U.S. economic recovery happens remains up in the air. But when it does happen, convenience stores will be on the front lines, according to Lori Stillman, vice president of research for industry trade association NACS.

"I personally believe the convenience landscape is uniquely positioned in the midst of the pandemic to lead in the economic recovery of retail," Stillman said in her presentation at the Conexxus virtual event, which took place Aug. 11-13.

Although no one is sure if it will be a U-shaped recovery or a V-shaped recovery, there are a few things the c-store industry does know, she said. For starters, there are very few retail channels, if any, that have the potential to more deeply seed the loyalty of its shoppers than the convenience channel, according to Stillman.

"When you start to stack up the strategic advantage of our industry, you start to see a pretty impressive list that is pretty difficult to beat," she pointed out.

Among the items on this list are:

- Half of the U.S. population is in a convenience store daily;
- With almost 160,000 locations, the channel is where consumers need it to be;
- The size of the format drives a streamlined assortment;
- C-stores lead with strong offers in many categories; and
- C-stores are "woven into the fabric" of their communities, driving consumer loyalty.

"When I think about the outlook for our industry, despite the incredibly challenging times we find ourselves in, I see nothing but excitement and opportunity ahead," Stillman said.

Looking at the challenges currently facing the industry, COVID-19 has fundamentally changed consumer behavior and the pandemic is reshaping the channel's future, she noted. Over the past five months, c-store operators have learned that loyalty matters, dayparts are evolving, consumers are demanding contactless payment options, and the channel needs to think beyond fuel — to name just a few.

Several headwinds also carried over from last year and will not go away when the pandemic challenges subside, said Stillman. They include swipe fees, labor, forecourt conversion, technology upgrades, ecommerce, and tobacco sales and profits. Heading into 2021, she believes the channel should focus, and execute well, on:

1. The future of payments;
2. Shopper loyalty and engagement;
3. Store design and layout;
4. Assortment; and
5. Community.

"All of this can help us not just survive, but really thrive, in whatever the new or now normal is going to be," Stillman said.

Based in Alexandria, Va., Conexxus is a nonprofit, member-driven technology organization dedicated to the development and implementation of standards, technologies innovation and advocacy for the convenience store and retail fueling market.

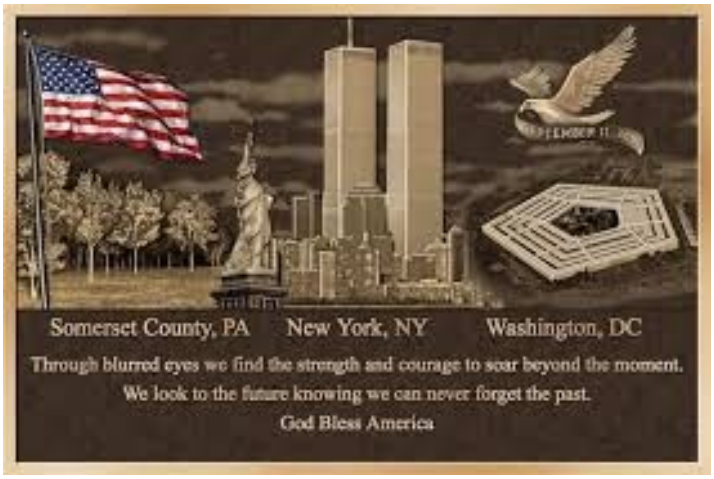
Treasury Secretary Clarifies Executive Order Regarding Social Security Withholding

SSDA-AT
August 24, 2020

As previously reported on, President Trump has issued an Executive Order deferring the employee portion of Social Security taxes from September 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The deferral is only available to employees who are paid less than$4,000 bi-weekly ($104,000 per year).

The Order directs the Secretary of the Treasury to issue guidance; no such guidance has been issued as of yet. However, subsequent to the Order being issued, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin stated that the deferral would not be mandatory for employers to implement.

In light of this announcement and the specific language in the Order, SESCO is now recommending that employers do not implement the change to withholding unless employees affirmatively elect to do so.



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Emission Inspection

Sept. 14,16,21

State Inspection

Nov. 9,11,16,18

PA: Applications Now Being Accepted For Next Round Of Assistance For Small Businesses Affected By COVID-19

Pennsy*lvania Petroleum Association*
August 17, 2020

On August 10, Gov. Wolf announced the COVID-19 Relief Statewide Small Business Assistance Program is now accepting applications for the next round of grants. The deadline for applications is August 28.
Gov. Wolf also announced the award of $96 million in COVID-19 Relief Statewide Small Business Assistance Program to 4,933 businesses.

The COVID-19 Relief Statewide Small Business Assistance funding was developed in partnership with state lawmakers and allocated through the state budget, which included $2.6 billion in federal stimulus funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, of which $225 million was earmarked for relief for small businesses.

The grants may be used to cover operating expenses during the shutdown and transition to re-opening, and for technical assistance including training and guidance for business owners as they stabilize and relaunch their businesses.

For more information on the program, visit DCED's COVID-19 Relief Statewide Small Business Assistance Program webpage. https://dced.pa.gov/programs/covid-19-relief-statewide-small-business-assistance/

Concerns Raised Over Long Delays In Processing Federal Motor Fuel Excise Tax Claims

Pennsylvania Petroleum Association
August 24, 2020

PMAA is hearing from petroleum marketers that they are experiencing long delays in the processing of federal motor fuel excise tax (FET) claims. The delays include ultimate vendor claims for sales of tax included motor fuels to state and local governments and nonprofit educational organizations, kerosene and av-gas used in aviation, undyed diesel fuel for use in intercity busses, tax included kerosene sales from blocked pumps and both retroactive and current year bio-diesel blender and alternative fuel tax credits.

Marketers are also reporting delays in processing heavy highway vehicle use tax (HHVUT) proof of payment certificates needed for state registration of cargo tanks and IRS 637 UV registrations. Both the U.S. Department of Treasury and the IRS say the delays are due to COVID-19 related altered working conditions.

While many of the claims pay interest after 60 days, PMAA is concerned if the delays continue, they could interfere with the daily operations of marketer operations. In response to marketers' concerns, PMAA sent a letter to IRS Commissioner Charles P. Rettig (https://www.pmaa.org/weeklyreview/attachments/PMAA_Letter_to_IRS_Commissioner_082120.pdf) emphasizing that many small business petroleum marketer operations could be disrupted if the delays are not resolved quickly and asked for a return to timely processing as soon as possible. (See a copy of the letter on page 9)

In the meantime, petroleum marketers experiencing delays in claim and paperwork processing should call the IRS Business and Specialty Tax Line at (800) 829-4933, M-F between 7:00am and 7:00 local taxpayer time. Be prepared to be placed on hold for an extended period.

In addition, those filing the federal heavy highway vehicle use tax should do so electronically and use the IRS Electronic Federal Tax Payment System for direct debit payment. Credit and debit cards are not accepted for payment of the HHVUT until January 1, 2021. Paper filing with payment by check is also available but expect significant delays.

SSDA-AT Legislative Updates

August 10, 2020

SSDA-AT Signs onto Joint Trades Support letter for, H.R. 7777 - "The Paycheck Protection Program Small Business Forgiveness Act"

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Ranking Member McCarthy, Chairwoman Velázquez, and Ranking Member Chabot:

The undersigned trade associations representing thousands of small businesses, banks, credit unions, financial institutions, and employees strongly support H.R. 7777, "The Paycheck Protection Program Small Business Forgiveness Act", sponsored by Representatives Chrissy Houlahan and Fred Upton.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), established by Congress in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, has provided millions of small businesses the economic relief they need to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. This bipartisan legislation would ensure our nation's small business owners can focus their time, energy, and resources back into their business and communities instead of allocating significant time and resources into completing complex forgiveness forms.

Given the dire economic data released late last month and ongoing challenges facing small businesses we urge the House to take up and pass this legislation without delay. This straightforward legislation would forgive all PPP loans of less than $150,000 upon the borrower's completion of a simple, one-page forgiveness document. PPP loans of $150,000 and under account for 86 percent of total PPP recipients, but less than 27 percent of PPP loan dollars. Expediting the loan forgiveness process for many of these hard-hit businesses will save more than $7 billion dollars and hours of paperwork.

Data provided in an independent analysis by AQN Strategies (AQN) has shown an estimated benefit of issuing auto-forgiveness for various loan size thresholds. AQN anticipates the combined resource requirements of operators' time and/or third-party expenses to represent an effective cost of $2,000-$4,000 for each business that applies for forgiveness, requiring 20-100 hours of focused time from key leaders of these businesses. With an average loan size of less than $19,000 for the smallest 60 percent of loans, this estimate would represent 10-20 percent of the loan amount itself, which is otherwise intended to support payroll, rent, and other obligationsnecessary to keep businesses alive and ready to restart. In addition, AQN's analysis suggests that the cost to businesses and lenders would be lower than the cost for the government to auto-forgive loans.

Small businesses and their employees are the backbone of our nation's economy and communities. Their time and resources would be better focused on getting the economy safely back up and running, not processing burdensome paperwork.

We strongly support H.R. 7777 and look forward to working with you, the Committee, and the 116th Congress to pass this bill and have it signed into law.

Thank you for your strong, common sense leadership on such a critical issue.

Sincerely,
SSDA-AT and other trade associations

August 17, 2020

From: U.S. Department of Labor U.S. Department of Labor Announces Guidance for the Lost Wages Assistance Program to Provide Needed Relief to Americans

The U.S. Department of Labor last week announced the release of guidance to help states implement the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program. LWA is authorized by Presidential Memorandum, and provides claimants in most Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs up to $400 per week additional benefits, starting with weeks of unemployment ending on or after Aug. 1, 2020, and ending Dec. 27, 2020 at the latest. LWA will be administered by states and territories through a grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and with support from the Labor Department.

To qualify for LWA benefits, individuals must provide self-certification they are unemployed or partially unemployed due to disruptions caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and the state must confirm that the individual is receiving at least $100 of underlying unemployment benefits.

LWA is funded by FEMA through a joint federal-state agreement and provides the states with two benefit options. For the $400 per week benefit, states must contribute 25 percent ($100) and the federal government will cover 75 percent of the cost ($300). States are encouraged to satisfy the 25 percent state match requirement and provide the additional $100 in benefits either through allocations of the state's Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF), provided under Title V of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Public Law 116-136) or other state funding. For the $300 per week benefit, FEMA will fund the entire amount and states may choose to simply satisfy the 25 percent state match, without allocating additional state funds, with the state funding used to pay regular state UI unemployment benefits.

"With the expiration of FPUC, LWA will provide important assistance to workers who need it," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training John Pallasch. "This program is another tangible example of this Administration's commitment to helping Americans during these challenging times. The Department and our partners at FEMA will work tirelessly in the coming, days and weeks to ensure LWA's vital and important benefits are made available to those most in need," Pallasch added.

The LWA program may end earlier than Dec. 27 if FEMA expends $44 billion prior or the balance of the Disaster Relief Fund decreases to $25 billion; or legislation is enacted that provides, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, supplemental federal unemployment compensation or similar compensation for unemployed or underemployed individuals.

SSDA-AT Legislative Updates

Payroll Taxes

In a Memorandum to the Secretary of the Treasury, the President directed the Secretary to defer the "withholding, deposit, and payment" of the payroll taxes that would otherwise be owed by certain employees between September 1 through December 31, 2020. As you may recall, pursuant to the CARES Act and the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act that were passed earlier this year, businesses have already had the option to defer (50% to Dec. 31, 2021, and 50% to Dec. 31, 2022).

Specifically, the Memorandum would apply to payroll taxes owed by employees whose pre-tax bi-weekly pay is less than $4,000. While the Memorandum specifies that the taxes be deferred "without any penalties, interest, additional amount, or addition to the tax," unless Congress takes further action on this point, these employee payroll taxes will ultimately still be due.

The prospect of having to collect and remit these payroll taxes in the future, coupled with the concern about communicating to employees the distinction between a tax deferral and forgiveness, have many employers understandably very nervous. This is before even considering the logistics that would be involved in changing the way payroll is run for some but not necessarily all of their employees.

The Department of Treasury is expected to be releasing further guidelines this week about how it will be implementing the Memorandum which will hopefully provide more direction.

In particular, many businesses will be eagerly awaiting further clarifications on a number of key issues including:

- Whether they will be required to implement the deferral or whether they will be permitted to either collect and hold or collect and remit the payroll taxes for their employees if they (or possibly their employees) elect to do so (Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in an interview over the weekend that the IRS can't force employers to stop withholding payroll taxes).
- How the deferred taxes will ultimately be collected (lump sum or over time), what employers' role and liability will be if they are unable to collect and remit the taxes, for example if the employee is no longer employed and whether, if it is determined that the employer is ultimately liable for taxes they are unable to collect from an employee, the payment by the employer of such taxes will be deemed additional income to the employee that the employer will owe even more payroll taxes on.
- How compensation will be calculated for the purposes of the $4,000 bi-weekly threshold.

Unemployment Benefits

On July 31, 2020, the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program expired. The FPUC program was created under the CARES Act and provided an additional $600 per week benefit for individuals claiming unemployment (which in most states included individuals who had been furloughed).

The continuation of enhanced unemployment benefits has been a key area of discussion as lawmakers have tried to negotiate the latest COVID-19 relief package. While the packages being promoted by both parties' leadership include some form of extension of enhanced benefits the details are very different. The HEROS Act, which was passed by the House in May, would simply extend the $600 per week benefit through January 31, 2021. The HEALS Act, which was introduced by Senate Republicans in late July, would provide an additional $200 per week through the end of September.

Starting in October, states would be directed to provide benefits equal to 70% of an employee's prior wages with the federal government providing a supplement of up to $500 per person per week to help the states hit that number. This effort to tie the benefits to prior wages is intended to address concerns that enhanced unemployment benefits have deterred employees from returning to work as businesses reopen.

In his Memorandum to the Secretary of Labor on 8/8, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Administrator of FEMA, the President directed the allocation of disaster relief funds to provide for additional unemployment benefits of $400 per week. Initially it appeared that to qualify for the additional federal funding, states would have to cover 25% ($100 per week) of the enhanced benefits, with the remaining $300 per week coming from federal disaster relief funds.

After a number of states publically indicated that they simply do not have the funds to satisfy such a match or would only be able to do so for a few weeks, the White House clarified that funds will be made available for a $300 per week enhanced benefit whether or not the states are able to chip in the additional $100. As with the payroll deferrals, those with an interest in this issue are eagerly awaiting further federal guidance.

PETROLEUM RETAILERS AND AUTO REPAIR ASSOCIATION, INC.

Brinton Executive Center
1051 Brinton Road Suite 304
Pittsburgh Pa 15221
Phone: (412) 241-2380
Fax: (412) 241-2815

Pennsylvania Approved class A & B Operator Training Registration Form

Class Dates: September 16, 2020

Time: Registration 8:30 am
Class 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Location: PRARA office

Price: $200 per person (non-member)
$175 per person (member discount)

****Due to the COVID-19, the class is limited to 5 people.****

Name_____

Email address:_____

Address:_____

Phone Number_____

Number Attending_____

Price Includes Operator A & B Training Binder, CD, Certificate of Completion

Amount_____@_____

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ATM Cash World
Tom Ranallo
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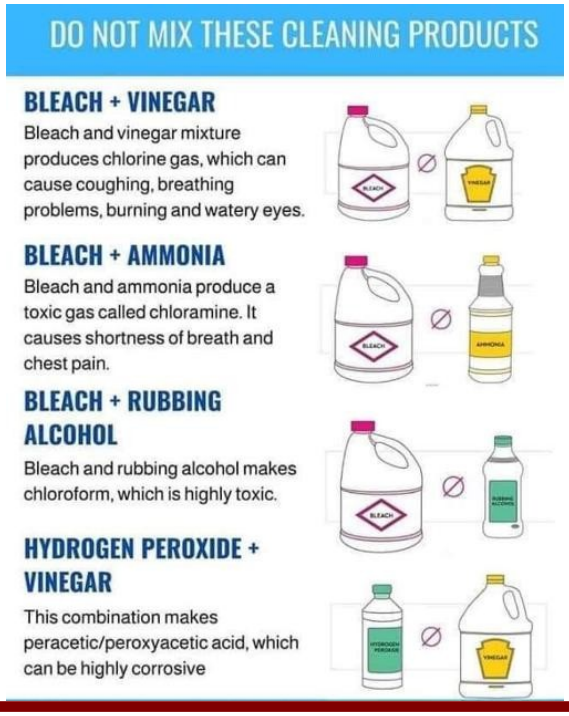

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Dave Ondik
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Reed Oil Company
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S.I.S.
J.R. Bachor-Tarentum, PA
724-224-1220

Total Tank Works LLC
Sean Tosadori-East Butler

TAXES

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Murrysville, PA
412-423-1093

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Total Tank Works LLC
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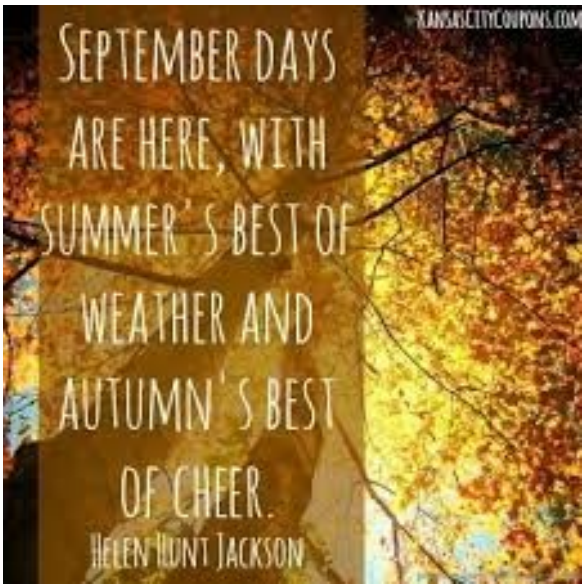

Calendar of Events

Labor Day	September 7
Patriot Day	September 11
Grandparents Day	September 13
U.S. Air Force Birthday	September 18
First Day of Fall	September 22

Business Hours:

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	8:30-3:30
Wednesday	8:30-3:30
Thursday	8:30-3:30
Friday	Closed

Contact:

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