

# 2008 **ARA** STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

At its Jan. 23 meeting, the Alabama Retail Association board of directors approved this legislative agenda for the 2008 regular session of the Alabama Legislature. During the session, which began Feb. 5 and will end by May 19, ARA also will monitor all bills with the potential to impact retailers.

## The ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS:

- legislation to **CREATE PARITY AND FAIRNESS ON LATE FEE CHARGES** for retailers for consumer credit transactions. We are asking for an increase in the minimum that can be collected from \$10 to \$18.
- legislation to **PROHIBIT LOCALITIES** from enacting **EMPLOYEE BENEFIT MANDATES**.
- legislation to impose **STIFFER PENALTIES** when thieves make their escapes through emergency exits. **THEFT BY EMERGENCY EXIT** would be a crime within the ARA-backed **ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT STATUTE**, which was enacted in 2006.
- an update to the Bad Check Statute to include **WORTHLESS CHECKS WITH ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES OR SIGNATURES ON FILE AS VALID, PROSECUTABLE OFFENSES**.
- **TAX CREDITS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES** that provide healthcare coverage for employees.



ARA supports fairness for retailers on late fee charges for consumer credit transactions.

- a monthlong **SALES TAX HOLIDAY** for **ENERGY-EFFICIENT PRODUCTS**.
- the **"COMMON SENSE CONSUMPTION ACT,"** legislation that spells out that those in the chain of distribution are not civilly liable for a consumer's weight gain or obesity.
- creation of the **ALABAMA TAX APPEALS COMMISSION** as an independent state tax court headed by a judge with specific training in the area of state and local taxation. These administrative law judges would be removed from the authority of the Alabama Department of Revenue and placed under the Office of the Attorney General as a separate division.
- the **STREAMLINED SALES TAX** initiative that levels the playing field for in-state and out-of-state retailers. This will provide a simplified sales tax system that makes the collection of sales taxes more manageable for businesses.
- the Alabama Civil Justice Reform Committee (ACJRC) in **TORT REFORM** efforts, including previously introduced bills concerning post-judgment interest, mental anguish and product liability.



Nine of 10 Americans say it's wrong to hold food companies liable for obesity-related health problems. ARA agrees.

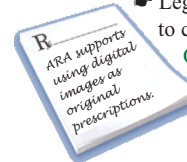


ARA supports legislation to make the punishment greater when thieves make their escapes through emergency or fire exits.

## ... The ARA SUPPORTS:

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- legislation designed to **REDUCE FRAUD** in **WORKERS' COMPENSATION** and **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**.
- **AMENDMENT-BY-AMENDMENT CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM** in order to streamline Alabama's constitution, remove archaic and offensive language and provide avenues by which the Alabama Legislature can enact meaningful tax reform.
- the **COALITION FOR ECONOMIC PROGRESS** in efforts to allow local governments the option to vote on whether or not to have seven-day sales of alcohol.
- Legislation to allow pharmacies to capture a **DIGITAL IMAGE OF A PRESCRIPTION** that will constitute the original prescription.



ARA opposes mandatory country of origin labeling at the state level on such products as seafood, meat, fruits, vegetables and peanuts. ARA favors a voluntary consumer-driven system.



ARA opposes legislation restricting expiration dates on gift cards or certificates. ARA also opposes legislation advocating "custodial taking" of unused balances on gift cards.

## The ARA OPPOSES:

- legislation requiring mandatory **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING**, or **COOL**, by retailers or restaurateurs.
- **BAND-AID** or **QUICK-FIX TAX SCHEMES** or singling out one particular industry or segment of business for punitive tax increases. ARA vehemently opposes any patchwork tax efforts.
- legislation to eliminate or restrict **CONTRACTUAL ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS**.
- legislation to change the current **ELECTION PROCESS FOR APPELLATE JUDGES**.
- **MANDATORY HEALTH CARE BENEFITS** that can further increase the price of healthcare coverage.
- **MANDATORY EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND WAGES**.
- **MANDATES ON THE PRICE** for which retailers can **SELL PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**.
- legislation restricting **EXPIRATION DATES ON GIFT CARDS OR CERTIFICATES**.
- **"CUSTODIAL TAKING"** legislation, which would require the unused balance on gift cards to go to the state treasury when those balances go unclaimed.
- legislation to restrict the normal **USE OF CUSTOMER INFORMATION** obtained in the regular course of business.