



frontline

The Official Monthly Publication of the Minnesota Grocers Association

April 2025

Crunch Time at the Capitol



We've officially entered "the grind" portion of the legislative session in St. Paul. With committee deadlines approaching in early April, legislators are holding marathon hearings that will stretch into the evenings as they race to complete bill hearings before the clock runs out. Once members return from Spring Break in mid-April, they'll have just four weeks to reach an agreement on budget targets before the constitutionally mandated adjournment on May 19. The prevailing expectation is that lawmakers will need every bit of that time—and possibly more—to finalize a two-year budget in this divided legislature.

The silver lining is that, following the return of legislative balance in the last election, it's unlikely that controversial legislation will make significant progress this session. On the flip side, this also means that major reforms to the regulations and mandates implemented over the past two years are not expected to move forward.

The MGA Government Relations Team remains focused on three key priorities: securing continued funding for the MGA's Carts to Careers program, advocating for sensible

adjustments to the Earned Sick and Safe Time and Paid Family and Medical Leave laws, and pushing for policies that will make Minnesota more competitive for businesses (including tax reform, vendor collections allowance, liquor laws, anti-trust issues, and crime reduction).

We encourage you to stay engaged by reading our weekly MGA Capitol Watch email updates, participating in our bi-weekly Capitol Checkout calls, and responding to calls to action or requests for input from the MGA Team. There will also be opportunities for MGA members to provide testimony in committees or participate in one-on-one meetings with key legislators.

THANK YOU to all members who joined us in late February for the MGA Legislative Day on the Hill! More than 70 MGA attendees had the chance to meet with key figures from both the Executive and Legislative branches, including Governor Tim Walz, Secretary of State Steve Simon, Speaker of the House Lisa Demuth, Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson, and many other legislators. We also crowned a new Bipartisan Bag-Off Champion, with Senator Johnson taking home this year's title.

The MGA Government Relations Team spent the day highlighting the importance of staying engaged in the legislative process and leveraging the resources available through the MGA. Member involvement is key to advancing our work in St. Paul and supporting the industry's priorities. Thank you again to all attendees who made the day a success!

Capitol Checkout Calls

The MGA Government Relations Team invites you to our discussions on the latest news from St. Paul. These exclusive members-only calls last up to 30 minutes and give you pertinent, up-to-the-minute legislative information about the latest happenings at the Capitol. **To increase content quality and the ability for MGA members to participate, these bi-weekly Capitol Check Out calls are now happening via Microsoft Teams.** Contact Steve Barthel for a meeting link. This month's calls are scheduled for **April 11 & 25 at 9:30 am. SB**

Become an MGA Legislative Sponsor



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**

LEADER

Coborn's, Inc.
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2025 MGA Foundation Golf Event & Scholarship

The MGA's Annual Golf Event is fast approaching! Join us on **Tuesday, May 27** at The Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, MN. This event is brought to you in partnership with the MGA Vendor Leadership Committee. The golf event is the sole fundraiser for the MGA Foundation Scholarship program, which provides scholarship opportunities for your employees and their dependents.



The MGA Foundation will also be hosting its 17th Annual Silent Auction held in conjunction with this event. The auction raises funds for the MGAF Scholarship Program and 100% of the proceeds directly support education advancement. Back again this year are the ever-popular MGAF Swag Bags. Each attendee will receive one gift bag in their golf cart. See insert for donation information.

Registration forms have been emailed out and the deadline to sign up is **May 16, 2025**. Space fill up fast, so register today. See insert or visit www.mnagrocers.com to register. **SM**

2025 MGA Annual Conference

Join us for the 2025 MGA Annual Conference on **Sunday, July 27 – Tuesday, July 29** at Madden's Resort in Brainerd, MN! Mark your calendars for this premier industry event. It delivers immense educational value and unparalleled networking in a relaxing and festive atmosphere. The event kicks off on Sunday night at the awards dinner, where we'll celebrate your colleagues in the food industry – the MGA is now accepting nominations for the 2025 Outstanding Grocer and Outstanding Vendor.

Nomination submissions are due no later than April 14.

Following the awards dinner is the hospitality night, a highly anticipated event filled with great networking opportunities. Start Monday with information-rich seminars, followed by golf tournaments, boat tours, and a fun, outdoor barbecue for the whole family. The conference wraps up on Tuesday morning with a speaker who will leave attendees inspired. Watch your mail for early bird registrations this month – register early as we anticipate a sellout! See insert. **KA**

Support the Food PAC of MN

The Food PAC of MN is now accepting donations for 2025. These funds are used to engage with legislators and candidates who are important in advancing MGA legislative priorities. It is critical that we replenish our funds for the 2026 election cycle so the Food PAC has the resources to continue its role in advocating for the food industry. Thank you to those who generously donated last year and for your continuing support of our efforts. See the insert for details or donate online by scanning the QR code. **SB**



MGA Promotes Earth Day Initiatives

The MGA is dedicated to being a robust and innovative organization. Evolving to provide you with the services, programs, and information that is most valuable in today's world. We are committed to utilizing our collective voice to tell industry's story. In honor of Earth Day on April 22, the MGA is encouraging consumers to reduce, reuse, and recycle. For the month of April, the MGA will give away reusable bags to any member who demonstrates how they encourage customers to reduce, reuse, and recycle. See insert. **KA**

Cole Helgeson Competes in NGA Best Bagger

After winning the MGA's Best Bagger Contest last summer, Cole Helgeson of Mackenthun's Fine Foods, Eagan, went on to represent Minnesota at the National Grocers Association Best Bagger Championship in Las Vegas last month. The MGA membership congratulates Cole on his fantastic representation of our great state. **SM**



MGA Updates

The MGA has moved offices. We are located in the same building, but a few floors up. You can find us at **1360 Energy Park Dr., Ste. 300, St. Paul, MN 55108**.

In continuing with growing the MGA opportunities, we are excited to announce a new communications management system. To ensure you continue to receive all communications, ensure the MGA is not marked as spam. If additional teammates want to be included please provide contact information. **KA**

Nominations Open for MGA Awards

The MGA is now accepting nominations for our 2025 Outstanding Grocer and Outstanding Vendor. These MGA awards honor those in the industry who have demonstrated excellence, made significant contributions to the industry, and are respected by their peers. This is a tremendous honor and a wonderful tradition at the MGA. The awards will be presented on **Sunday, July 27** at MGA's Annual Conference. Please see the insert to submit your nominations, which are due no later than **April 14**. **KA**

Minnesota Grown Retailer of the Year Contest Survey

The MGA and Minnesota Grown are eager to hear your thoughts on the annual Minnesota Grown Retailer of the Year Contest and Awards! Whether your stores have participated or not, your feedback is essential in helping us fine tune the contest details and make it better for all grocers.



Please take a few minutes to complete this brief, anonymous survey. Three lucky respondents will win a Minnesota Grown t-shirt, hat, or apron! Your input matters, and we truly appreciate your time and insights. Thank you! <https://forms.gle/xf9jXj25NcBzJubV9>. **SM**

2025 MGA Member Directory

Our annual member directory is in the mail. This publication is a one-of-a-kind resource tool available only to MGA members. The MGA is a member-driven organization – a community that is integral to the viability of Minnesota's grocery industry. We are proud of the members we serve and this year we are working on expanding our member base. In your day-to-day business activities, you work with many partners – other retailers, vendors, and suppliers. As you read through the directory, please consider those relationships. Who's missing? Let us know and let's get them involved. The MGA wants to make sure that our diverse membership is represented and that every corner of the state has a strong voice. **KA**



MGA Feedback Needed

The MGA Board of Directors is holding its annual retreat in early April. Please contact Patrick Garofalo at if you have 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. **PG**

WASHINGTON NEWS

Another Continuing Resolution – Shutdown Averted

In a move to prevent a government shutdown, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) in mid-March that will fund the government through September 2025. The CR maintains government funding at levels set during Joe Biden's presidency, but with adjustments. It reduces non-defense spending while increasing defense funding by approximately \$6 billion. The passage of the bill in the House marked a significant win for President Donald Trump and House Speaker Mike Johnson, who succeeded in securing Republican support and pushing the bill through without Democratic backing.

The Senate passed the bill on a 54-46 vote, largely along party lines. Ten members of the Senate Democratic caucus voted in favor, despite internal party opposition. These senators ultimately decided that avoiding a shutdown was more crucial than blocking the bill, with Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer warning that a shutdown would have allowed the Trump administration to deem entire agencies, programs, and personnel as non-essential, leading to widespread furloughs with no guarantee of rehire.

Trump Tariff Threats Loom for Canada and Mexico

In February, President Trump proposed a 25% tariff on goods imported from Canada and Mexico. These tariffs were initially set to take effect in early March, but the White House delayed their implementation on goods covered by the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) free trade deal until April. The delay applies to items such as televisions, air conditioners, avocados, and beef. Additionally, tariffs on potash, a vital fertilizer ingredient for U.S. farmers, were reduced from 25% to 10%. White House officials stated that around 50% of U.S. imports from Mexico and 62% from Canada could still be subject to tariffs. The White House also plans to introduce further tariff measures, with recommendations for "reciprocal" trade duties scheduled to be released on April 2.

EPA Rolls Back Refrigeration Rules

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took a significant step in mid-March to by rolling back restrictive rules on the manufacture, import, sale, and use of products containing high global warming potential (GWP) hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). This move eliminates the requirement for the retail grocery sector to exclusively use low GWP HFC refrigerants. Grocers, who have long struggled with costly regulations that hinder growth and raise consumer prices, will benefit from this long-awaited change.

Food Traceability Rule Delayed

In late March, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a 30-month extension to the current Food Traceability Rule compliance date of January 2026. This extension will push the compliance date until at least July 2028. The announcement by the new leadership at FDA will provide the entire food supply chain the critically needed time to work with FDA on the most burdensome and unworkable components of the Rule and determine how to implement it in the most efficient and effective way possible. The extension provides critical time for affected companies across the food industry to continue working together to develop interoperable systems to communicate and maintain the records FDA is seeking. FDA intends to publish a proposed rule in the Federal Register in order to formally extend the compliance date.

Congratulate MGAF Scholarship Recipients

The MGA Foundation Scholarship Program has ended and recipients will be announced in the coming weeks. The MGA is offering multiple opportunities to showcase your company's commitment to great careers and the success of your team members. Place a Congratulations Advertisement in the *Summer 2025 Minnesota Grocer* magazine and sponsor a golf hole at the annual MGAF Golf Event. Learn more at <https://www.mngrocers.com/members/golf/>. **KA**

MGA 2025 Advertising Package

Limited space is still available for advertising in the *Minnesota Grocer* magazine, show your support of your association. This is a great opportunity to get your company front and center and showcase your commitment to the food industry of Minnesota. Our magazine has an overall circulation of 6,000 per issue - plus it's available online! It is published quarterly and each issue is packed with topical and valuable information on issues relevant to the entire food industry - farm to fork. **KA**

MGA 2025

Annual Conference

July 27 - 29

Don't miss out – there is still plenty of time to sponsor this year's conference.

Sponsoring the Annual Conference elevates your company and shows your commitment to the food industry of Minnesota. You receive tremendous name recognition, not only during the conference, but throughout the entire year. Thank you to the below companies who have supported the MGA and are committed to industry. **KA**

LEVEL 1

Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc.
KEMPS
PepsiCo Beverages North America
SpartanNash
UNFI/Cub Foods

LEVEL 2

Mason Brothers Co.
Old Dutch Foods, Inc.
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Reyes Coca-Cola
Russ Davis Wholesale
SCR

LEVEL 3

Bimbo Bakeries
Blue Bunny
Country Hearth/Pan-O-Gold Baking Co.
JB/No Name Steaks
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Miller Poultry
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Opal Foods
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LEVEL 4

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*as of 3/20/2025



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St. Paul, MN 55108

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bulletin BOARD

April 10

MGA Champions Luncheon
Hastings, MN
MGA Program

May 27

MGA Foundation Golf Event
Oak Grove, MN
MGA Program

July 27-29

MGA Annual Conference
Brainerd, MN
MGA Program

August 1 - September 30

MN Grown Retailer of the
Year Contest
MGA Program



Handle Bags from grocery stores was invented in St. Paul more than a century ago. In the early 1900s, Walter Deubener and his wife Lydia owned a grocery store on the corner of Cedar and Seventh streets. After seeing his customers were having a tough time carrying groceries home, Deubener went to the drawing board. After months of tinkering, he got the idea of using a cord to form handles and wrapping the cord beneath the bag to carry extra weight.

You Asked it

Q: Are Easter Baskets taxable?

A: When a gift basket or other combination package (bundled transaction) includes food and food ingredients special rules apply and the sale may or may not be taxable. The sale is taxable if: 1. the seller's purchase price of the taxable items in the transaction is more than 50% of the total purchase price of all of the items in the transaction, or 2. the seller's sales price of the taxable items in the transaction is more than 50% of the total sales price of the transaction. Sellers cannot use a combination of the purchase price and sales price when making the 50% determination for a transaction. Use tax is due on the seller's cost of taxable items included in the bundle if: 1) the retail sale of the bundled transaction is not taxable, and 2) the seller's purchase price of all taxable items in the bundled transaction is more than \$100.

Questions? Call MGA 1-800-966-8352



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