



# TRA NEWSLETTER

News affecting Retailers & Grocers in Texas Industry

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## Texas Retailers Newsletter: December 2017

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## Letter from the President



Happy Holidays Texas Retailers:

The holiday shopping season is in full swing and by all accounts Texas retailers are having a great season. The economy is good, unemployment is low, and the weather is great. Most of us even got a little taste of a traditional holiday season with the snow fall that many parts of the state received last week. Your TRA team has been busy as well, promoting Texas retail during this holiday shopping season. As you may have seen in our various social media posts, we have had many opportunities to speak on behalf of Texas retail regarding the holiday shopping season-with

media outlets from across the state. Our goal is to further position TRA as THE resource for retail information during this most important time of the year for our industry, and to also establish TRA

as the go-to resource for all things retail. If you, your company or store is interested in serving as one of our industry spokespeople, please contact Justin Williamson at [jwilliamson@txretailers.org](mailto:jwilliamson@txretailers.org).

As we send this newsletter, we can report that we are just a couple of steps from having Tax Reform passed by the Congress and sent to the President for his signature. Members from the US House and Senate are actively negotiating the final compromise bill, from the tax reform bills each chamber has respectively passed in recent weeks. Their goal is to arrive at a compromise, have it passed by each chamber, and deliver it to the President by Christmas Eve. As such, please be on the lookout for TRA updates on the progress of tax reform over these next couple of weeks. In addition to our work on the federal level, there is much activity on the state level, even though we are in the interim between legislative sessions. Specifically, we expect the full slate of interim charges to be issued by state leadership in the coming weeks, which will trigger a wave of legislative hearings both here in Austin and across the state during the spring. We will keep TRA members up to date on the interim committee processes, as well as reach out to specific members for opportunities to tell your story to lawmakers on the various interim issues we will be tracking. If you or your company are interested in engaging in the interim committee process, please reach out to TRA's VP of Government & Regulatory Affairs, Jim Sheer at [jsheer@txretailers.org](mailto:jsheer@txretailers.org).

2018 will also be a major election year here in Texas, with all the statewide elected officials up for re-election, as well as most of the State Legislature and our Congressional delegation. We have already seen many retirements and resignations among Texas lawmakers at both the federal and state levels, in addition to interesting primary challenges announced over the past month or so.

Now, with the candidate filling deadline having just passed on the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month, we have a clear picture of just how competitive the 2018 election cycle will be in Texas, at all levels. Specifics are included in the government affairs update inside this newsletter.

The fact that 2018 will be such an important year electorally, underscores the need for TRA members to support the association's political efforts by contributing to our PACs (TRAPAC and TRA Fed-PAC), as well as to our general advocacy fund, the Retail Advocates Fund or RAF. Your support of these key tools 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 inaugural Advocacy Summit, March 23-25, will be great opportunities for members of TRA and the retail industry in Texas to spend valuable time with key lawmakers from our state. Specifically, discussing the most topical advocacy issues facing the retail industry and networking with Texas's most retail-friendly members of the Texas Legislature and Members of Congress. Click [here](#) for more details on how you can participate in the TRA Advocacy Summit.

Additionally, our [Texas Retailers Forum will be in Corpus Christi in 2018](#) and will take place at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, July 22-23. 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 hundreds of 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 are inside this newsletter. Make plans now to secure your company's spot at these can't miss events.

As we wrap up a successful 2017, we look forward to an even better 2018. We hope that all of you have a successful and enjoyable holiday season filled with great sales numbers and quality time spent with family and friends. As always, thank you for supporting TRA and we look forward to seeing all of you in 2018.

Sincerely,



Texas Retailers Association  
President/CEO

## 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 at a discounted rate until January 1, 2018!**

**Register for the Texas Retailers Advocacy Summit!**

## Legislative Update



### **Texas Primary Election Update – (election date - March 6, 2018)**

December 11<sup>th</sup> was the filing deadline for all candidates seeking to have their name on the March ballot and there will be lots of moving parts to keep up with to say the least. With a handful of Texas Congressional seats opening up over the last month, we have seen many current and former members of the State Legislature announcing their bids to move their work to Washington DC. At least 7 of the 36-member Congressional Delegation from Texas will not return, opening up a landslide of competitors for their seats.

#### **Congressional Open Seats:**

Ted Poe (retiring)  
Lamar Smith (retiring)  
Jeb Hensarling (retiring)  
Sam Johnson (retiring)  
Gene Green (retiring)  
Joe Barton (retiring)  
Beto O'Rourke (running for US Senate)

Statewide races will see Republican Gov. **Greg Abbott will face a primary opponent, but most notably, he will see** a Democratic challenger in November with both Dallas County Sheriff **Lupe Valdez or Andrew White, son of late Texas Governor Mark White, as potential challengers.**

Land Commissioner **George P. Bush has a primary opponent in former State Senator and Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson** while Agriculture Commissioner **Sid Miller is being challenged by Republican, Trey Blocker of Austin.**

More than half of the members of the Texas Senate up for reelection will face primary opponents with many of those being labeled as highly competitive. The Texas House of Representatives is no different, several key leadership positions have been vacated leaving the field open to their challengers. Most notably, House Speaker Joe Straus will not seek reelection in 2018. This move led Republican leadership to convene special meetings in Austin attempt to draw guidelines for choosing a new Speaker of the House in January of 2019.

**TRAPAC and TRA FedPAC 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.**



## Federal Update

### Tax Reform Update

The United States Senate passed H.R. 1, the Tax Cut and Jobs Act, by a vote of 51-49. Next, the U.S. House and U.S. Senate will need to reconcile both of their respective passed Tax Reform bills. President Trump has a stated deadline of Christmas Eve for Tax Reform to reach his desk for him to sign. The Texas Retailers Association will continue to keep our members updated on the "conference" process.

We know many of you reached out to our U.S. Senators and asked them to support tax reform. We appreciate your efforts on behalf of retailers across the state. The Texas Retailers Association sent letters to Senators Cornyn and Cruz and Senate Majority Leader McConnell, asking them to support comprehensive tax reform on behalf of the Texas retail industry.



### Member Spotlight: *Nothing Bundt Cakes*

To find the perfect recipe, you first need the perfect ingredients. And that's what our founders Dena Tripp and Debbie Shwetz were for each other. In 1997, they joined forces, or better yet kitchens, to help make cakes to entertain their friends and family. The cakes they made were delicious, unlike anything anyone had tasted. As a result, their friends and family asked them to entertain more and more.

They quickly realized this side project of theirs could be something more. There was a gap in the world for delicious cakes, readily available, that didn't compromise on their ingredients. Real eggs, butter and cream cheese; nothing was too good to achieve perfection. And perfection are those decadent, slowly melting bites, we all know and love.

Flash forward and the Nothing Bundt Cakes brand has grown nationwide. Built on Dena and Debbie's vision, each bakery still has the warmth and nostalgia of its home-kitchen roots, but we

also take a modern approach for the world today. So whether you're enjoying a bundt cake or a bundtini one thing is certain - perfection is all we offer.

Learn More at <https://www.nothingbundtcakes.com/>.

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



### Texas Retailers Golf Tournament *Benefiting the Texas Retailers Education Foundation*

Eagle Pointe Golf Club  
12440 Eagle Pointe Dr.  
Mont Belvieu, Texas 77535

8:00AM Friday, April 20, 2018  
8:30AM Shotgun Start

Individual Fee: \$175 | Golf Foursome: \$700 | Sponsorships Available!

### Donations Welcome!

Donations of premium quality items for this year's tournament are welcome!

Examples include:

- Gift Certificates
- Golf Balls
- Golf Tees
- Golf Towels
- Prizes

### Contact Information

Justin Williamson  
[jwilliamson@txretailers.org](mailto:jwilliamson@txretailers.org)  
(512) 472-8261 X 106

Learn More About the 2018 TREF Golf Tournament!

## 2018 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 at a discounted rate until January 1, 2018!**

**Register for the Texas Retailers Forum!**

## **97th Annual WAFC Convention**



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!**

## **Grocers Corner - In the Cart**



## **Texas WIC Program Training Update**

As mentioned on the WIC Conference call recently held, all employees/clerks involved in processing Texas WIC transactions are required to successfully complete the WIC online training program annually. Please click [here](#) to directly link to the TX WIC web site and one of the training modules like **Vendor Cashier Training** that your employees can register and then complete at their own pace.

## **Fresh Produce Trucks Receive Electronic Logging Device Delay**

Truckers carrying fresh produce and other agricultural commodities have been given a 90-day temporary waiver from Electronic Logging Device rule mandate that will be implemented Dec. 18. To review the article regarding details about the extension, please click [here](#).



## FDA Food Safety Modernization Act & The Produce Safety Network

When the Produce Safety Rule became final in late 2015, FDA (Food Drug Administration) began building the [Produce Safety Network](#) to support the efforts of farmers, and other key stakeholders to implement the new rule, which is aimed at preventing foodborne illnesses associated with produce products. Foodborne outbreaks in the past have been horrible for the customers impacted by them, impacts the stores they shopped, and the sales of the products thought to have carried the illness and in some cases miss diagnosed.

January 2018 is the effective date for compliance for the larger produce growers across the nation. As FDA developed the Produce Safety Network, it was evident it would require coordination between two branches within FDA. As the PSN has evolved, please click [here](#) to review latest updates on "Building the Produce Safety Network". Our customers and our businesses will benefit directly from the success of this process.

### SNAP Program Retail Vendor Eligibility Requirements Effective January 17, 2018

USDA/FNS has announced the new stocking requirements that are effective January 17, 2018. Please click [here](#) to review those new requirements. USDA/FNS is in final stages of development of a recorded webinar that will be available to the SNAP vendor community in mid-December. As soon as it becomes available, we will send out to our members.

In addition, these changes in policies that impact SNAP vendors can be found posted at this USDA/FNS [link](#). If you have any questions regarding the new policy, please reach out to Joe Williams at [jwilliams@txretailers.org](mailto:jwilliams@txretailers.org).

### SNAP Program Statistics Update

As expected we are continuing to see impact on the SNAP Program participation as well as the dollars spent due to Hurricane Harvey. November numbers do show about a 4% increase over the last normal month prior to Harvey. I expect these are part of the Harvey residents that lost their jobs due to the Hurricane and have filed for benefits. The D(Disaster) -SNAP participants and benefit dollars distributed thru the D –SNAP aren't posted in these numbers, only those participating in regular SNAP Program benefits. Below are the current TX SNAP Program dollars and we included the national numbers from our sister states for the WIC Program. The SNAP Program statistics were updated for participants and households but not for benefits. Reminder the national numbers lag behind by three months. Enclosed is the most current information available.

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

<u>Month</u>	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Participates</u>	<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Ave per Case</u>
Oct 17	1,706,890	4,013,502	\$458,326,985.00	\$269.00
Nov 17	1,712,663	4,021,517	\$459,304,225.00	\$268.00

***Twelve Month Rolling Average***

Oct-Nov 17	1,662,893	3,937,081	\$454,429,672.00	\$273.00
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#### Look Back To Last Year (2016) at This Time

Nov 16	1,674,271	3,962,720	\$455,228,418.00	\$272.00
Dec 16	1,654,411	3,912,257	\$448,725,497.00	\$271.00

How do we compare on the SNAP Program participation to our neighbors and nation-wide.  
The latest numbers available are Sept 17 compared to Sep 16.

	<u>Participates</u>	<u>Households</u>
<b>National Average</b>	<b>&lt;03.3%&gt;</b>	<b>&lt;02.7%&gt;</b>
<u>States</u>		
Texas	+20.9%	+14.9%
New Mexico	<-03.5%>	<-01.3%>
Oklahoma	<-03.3%>	<-02.0%>
Louisiana	<-14.2%>	<-13.2%>
Arkansas	<03.5%>	<-03.5%>

How do we compare on WIC Program participation tour neighbors and nation-wide? The latest numbers available are Sep 17 compared to Sep 16.

<b>State</b>	<b>Participation</b>
National Average	<-06.3%>
Texas	<-06.1%>
Louisiana	<-05.0%>
Arkansas-	<- 04.4%>
Oklahoma	<-07.4%>
New Mexico	<06.8%>

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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](http://www.txretailers.org) and join today!

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**Our mailing address is:**

Texas Retailers Association  
1250 S Capital of Texas Hwy  
West Lake Hills, TX 78746-6522

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