

# Newsletter



## Happy 2025 to all of our members!

As a member of VRGA, you have access to a reliable and respected voice that actively represents the interests of businesses like yours in the state of Vermont. We are deeply committed to advocating for our members, working to improve policies and initiatives that support Vermont's retail and grocery sectors, and promoting the growth and success of local businesses.

In addition to our advocacy efforts, VRGA offers valuable member benefits, including educational resources, networking opportunities, and a strong voice in the statehouse. We provide our members with the tools and support they need to navigate challenges, stay informed about industry trends, and thrive in an increasingly competitive market.

In this new year if you are aware of any businesses in your area that you feel would be a great addition to VRGA and would benefit please feel free to reach out to us and we will engage with them.

Thank you and again here's to a happy and prosperous 2025!

*In this edition of our newsletter, we've gathered important updates and opportunities to keep you informed and engaged. Here's what's inside:*

- **Legislative Session Kickoff:** Get a recap of how the 2025 legislative session has started and what it means for Vermont retailers.
- **Monthly Update Calls:** Stay engaged with our monthly calls, where we'll share key updates and give you a chance to weigh in.
- **And More!**

## THANK YOU ANNUAL SPONSORS

### CHAMPION



### SUPPORTING



### SUSTAINING



### **Swipe Fee Reform**

This week, we experienced a shift in sponsorship as Senator Chittenden stepped away from co-sponsoring the swipe fee bill, likely influenced by concerns raised by the banking and credit card industries. However, Senator Perchlik, who chairs the influential Senate Appropriations Committee, remains firmly committed, and our House sponsors are equally steadfast. We've seen strong results from our efforts to mobilize business communications with legislators, and additional outreach is ongoing.

### **Clean Heat Standard (CHS):**

The Clean Heat Standard encountered a challenge this week following the Vermont Public Utility Commission's (PUC) release of its proposed rules. The PUC recommended against moving forward with the program, citing implementation challenges, even though their analysis projected modest fuel price impacts, less than 10 cents per gallon in 2026, potentially rising to 45 cents by 2035. Legislative dynamics have also shifted since the last veto override, and a similar outcome now appears unlikely. This issue will require a thoughtful approach as discussions continue.

### **Data Privacy:**

In a meeting this week with the governor's office, we received confirmation that they remain opposed to any bill containing a Private Right of Action (PRA), reiterating their intention to veto such legislation. They've asked to review the bill immediately upon introduction to prepare their messaging and coordinate support within their caucus. While the Attorney General's office expressed interest in finding a collaborative solution, the governor's office noted no progress on this front and reaffirmed its firm stance against PRAs.

Committee jurisdiction for the bill remains undecided, with discussions pointing to either the Senate Institutions Committee, chaired by Senator Wendy Harrison, or the Senate Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs Committee, chaired by Senator Alison Clarkson. Depending on the final drafting, it's also possible the bill could move through multiple committees, potentially allowing for revisions or jurisdictional compromises that could support our efforts.

*As the session progresses, we are encouraged by the energy and unity of our allies. Notably, the decision to start the bill without exemptions has drawn key groups like bankers and insurers back into our coalition.*

**As an FYI below are links for our elected representatives.**

[All Senators](#)

[All Representatives](#)



# Association News

Newsletter- January 2025



## Welcoming Maggie Lenz

We're thrilled to announce Maggie Lenz of Atlas Government Affairs as our new lobbyist in Montpelier. With her extensive experience and strong connections at the State House, Maggie is well-positioned to advocate for our association as we navigate the legislative session.

## Register today! Monthly Legislative Updates

To keep you informed, we'll host monthly virtual meetings starting February 2nd, held twice a day (9:00-10:00 AM and 3:00-4:00 PM) to update you on key legislative issues impacting your businesses. Your participation and feedback will be essential, and we'll also call on you to engage directly with legislators when necessary. Let's work together to make this year a success! Meeting details and links to contact elected representatives are below.

[Register for 9:00 AM slots](#)

[Register for 3:00 PM slots](#)

February 02 9:00-10:00 AM 3:00-4:00 PM

March 03 9:00-10:00 AM 3:00-4:00 PM

April 07 9:00-10:00 AM 3:00-4:00 PM

May 05 9:00-10:00 AM 3:00-4:00 PM

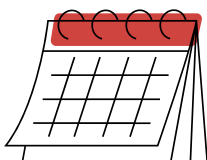
June 02 9:00-10:00 AM 3:00-4:00 PM

## 2025 VRGA Events

**Legislative Day** - April 2025

**Scholarship Golf Tournament** - June 4, 2025

**Annual Meeting** - September 25, 2025



Get Involved! Your voice matters. Join us in advocating for these priorities by attending legislative events, contacting your representatives, or sharing your experiences as a retailer. Together, we can make a difference for Vermont's retail industry. For updates and more information, visit [vtrga.org](http://vtrga.org) or contact [info@vtrga.org](mailto:info@vtrga.org).

## Labor Law Posters

As a valued VRGA member, you will once again receive a complimentary labor law poster in 2025. Due to unforeseen delays at the state level, distribution of the posters was postponed by a few weeks. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at [info@vtrga.org](mailto:info@vtrga.org).

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Associated Grocers of New England is a full service Cooperative Grocery Wholesaler supplying Supermarkets and Convenience Stores from Maine to New York.

### 2024 Holiday Retail Sales Break Records

Core retail sales for the 2024 holiday season grew 4% over 2023, reaching a record \$994.1 billion, surpassing the National Retail Federation's (NRF) forecast. Full-year sales hit \$5.28 trillion, up 3.6% from 2023. Lower inflation and a mix of online and in-person shopping fueled growth, with online sales increasing 8.6% to \$296.7 billion. December alone saw core retail sales rise 4.2% year-over-year, with gains across most retail sectors, including furniture, electronics, and health stores. NRF also reported holiday hiring of 438,000 seasonal workers, meeting expectations. Read more [here](#).

### Impacts that Proposed Tariffs Could Have on Retail and Manufacturers

Retailers:

- Face higher costs, likely passing price increases to consumers.
- Smaller retailers may struggle or shut down due to inflexibility.
- Larger retailers diversifying supply chains but face delays and costs.

Consumers:

- Higher prices for goods (e.g., \$40 toaster rising to \$48-\$52).
- Disproportionate impact on low-income families.
- Reduced spending power and inflation-like effects.

Manufacturers:

- Domestic production is expensive, limiting options.
- Shift to cheaper countries risks lower product quality and labor issues.

Read more [here](#).

### Financing for Energy Improvements

Businesses, nonprofits, and institutions can access affordable financing solutions to make energy improvements with little to no upfront cost. Loan payments can often be offset by monthly energy savings, reducing operating costs and creating a more comfortable space. Options include the Business Energy Loan, offering low-interest rates, flexible terms, and no closing costs, or tailored institutional financing for larger projects.

Find more information [here](#).

### Registration Now Open for Winter Cheese Conference!

Tickets are now on sale for Vermont Cheese Council's 2025 Artisan Cheesemaker Winter Conference! This year's virtual conference focuses on two deep-dive topics, each spanning a half-day with industry experts. Descriptive Sensory Analysis with Roy Deroschers will include sensory training, innovative consumer testing methods, Flavor Leadership Criteria, and the latest UVM Extension research on artisan cheese sensory quality. The Art of Affinage with Eric Meredith will include technical considerations for managing the aging process, common affinage-related defects and shoestring fixes for them, and affinage specification for continuous improvement. While content is curated by cheesemakers for cheesemakers, we love to see all our monger, retailer, distributor, and industry friends who attend every year, too! Visit the conference website at [vtcheese.com/conference](https://vtcheese.com/conference) for more details and the link to register!



### Get the most out of your membership

The Vermont Retail and Grocers Association has partnered with these organizations after careful consideration and review. VRGA believes these organizations can offer superior customer service along with considerable savings to member businesses. In addition to these benefits, we offer a comprehensive package of services. Learn more about our [services here](#).

#### Payment Solutions

Wix, a premiere website platform and POS solution, allows you to sell online and in store. Create a beautiful website with easy templates. [Contact us](#) to schedule a demo and receive special VRGA member rates.



#### Multi-state 401K Program

Provide great retirement plans to yourself and your staff, without the high cost, liability, and time drain of paperwork oversight. Member Chris Henry, President of The Medical Store, shares, "we ended up saving over \$12,000 annually" [Learn more](#).



#### Payroll Services

A Vermont company offering easy and economical payroll services. Services include payroll checks, tax filings, reports, new hire reporting and more. Member discount & savings of up to \$150. [Learn more](#).



#### Business Insurance Program

MMG Insurance offers a comprehensive and competitive insurance program designed for your business. Exclusive 5% discount for members.



#### Vision Insurance

Low cost vision program with major benefits. Monthly premiums starting at \$5.95/mo.



#### Dental Insurance

Access to a variety of affordable plan options with no minimum enrollments. Plans starting at \$41.75/mo.



For more information, please email [info@vtrga.org](mailto:info@vtrga.org).