

Newsletter



2025 VRGA Legislative Priorities

The 2025 legislative session comes on the heels of significant political shifts that signal the desire in Vermont for new approaches in state government. While Democrats maintain a majority in both the House and the Senate, the loss of their veto-proof advantage and a wave of leadership changes in both chambers reflect a party working to rebuild and adapt after historic losses. Republican John Rodgers's unseating of Progressive incumbent Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman exemplifies growing voter concern for affordability and economic relief, priorities that align closely with the needs of Vermont's businesses. These dynamics present opportunities for VRGA to work collaboratively with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to advance our priorities and support Vermont's economic growth.

See the next page for details.

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

- **VRGA's Legislative Priorities:** Explore our key advocacy efforts for the 2025 legislative session and how you can get involved.
- **3SquaresVT Program Updates:** Learn about the program's details and how it can support your business and community.
- **NRF Zoom Call on Tariffs:** Join NRF for an informative discussion on the proposed tariffs and their potential impact on retailers.
- **And More!**

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Retail Theft Mitigation

Retail theft continues to challenge retailers across Vermont. VRGA will advocate for stronger measures to deter theft and protect businesses.

Swipe Fee Reform

VRGA supports efforts to reform credit card swipe fees by eliminating fees on the sales tax portion of transactions. This change would reduce costs for retailers and consumers while addressing an unfair practice.

Opposition to New Taxes

To support affordability for consumers and protect retailers, VRGA will oppose new taxes on goods, including items such as clothing, beverages, and other products important to our members

PFAS Regulation

As Vermont addresses PFAS in packaging, VRGA will work to ensure science-based, practical regulations that minimize supply chain disruptions and provide clear guidance for compliance.

Balanced Data Privacy Legislation

VRGA supports consumer privacy protections but will advocate for legislation that avoids undue operational burdens for retailers and reduces the risk of predatory litigation while maintaining robust privacy standards.

Opposition to Flavored Vape Product Bans

To protect Vermont's retail businesses, VRGA will oppose bans on flavored vape products and advocate for balanced regulations that address public health without harming retailers.

Opposition to Expanding the Bottle Bill

Expansions to Vermont's bottle bill could increase operational and financial burdens on retailers. VRGA will oppose such expansions and advocate for alternative solutions to achieve environmental goals.

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 or contact info@vtrga.org.



As the year draws to a close, we want to express our heartfelt thanks to our dedicated team, loyal retailers, and trade partners who have made this year a success.

Together, we've achieved so much, facing every challenge with resilience and determination.

Here's to new goals, shared successes, and another year of growth!

2025

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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.

Industry News

Newsletter – December 2024



Turning Returns Into Revenue: Strategies for Retail Success in 2024

Returns continue to be a significant challenge and opportunity for retailers, with projected total returns reaching \$890 billion in 2024 and accounting for 16.9% of annual sales. A positive return experience is crucial for maintaining brand loyalty, as 76% of consumers prioritize free returns, and 67% are deterred by negative return experiences. Flexible return options, such as no box/no label returns and immediate refunds, increase customer satisfaction, with 84% of shoppers favoring retailers that offer these features.

Retailers are responding to consumer demand by upgrading returns capabilities, with 68% planning improvements within six months, while also addressing challenges like rising costs, fraud, and behaviors like bracketing, which is common among Gen Z shoppers. During the holiday season, when return rates rise by 17%, many retailers are bolstering their operations by hiring seasonal staff and partnering with third-party logistics providers to manage the influx. Prioritizing seamless returns not only enhances customer retention but also safeguards profitability in a competitive market. Read more [here](#).

NRF Tariff Discussion

Join NRF on [December 19 at 1:30 p.m.](#) ET for an in-depth discussion on the proposed tariffs on U.S. imports, including a universal 10%-20% tariff on all imports and a steep 60%-100% tariff on goods from China.

This session will explore the potential economic impact of these tariffs, highlight key insights from the NRF and Trade Partnership Worldwide report on how everyday household items may be affected, and provide an outlook on what to expect as President-elect Trump prepares to return to the White House in January. Register now to stay informed!

[Register here](#)

Time to recycle your mercury thermostats for money?

Many old thermostats contain mercury—a highly toxic heavy metal—and Vermont law bans these from the trash. Additionally, our free collection program pays you \$5 per mercury thermostat that you turn-in. It's easy—when you change out a mercury thermostat for an electric one, bring it to your nearest drop-off location. Check Thermostat Recycling Corporation's zip-code locator [here](#) for your nearest drop-off location.

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State and Regulatory

Newsletter – December 2024



3SquaresVT Opportunity

This Holiday Season, Hunger Free Vermont is collaborating with grocery stores, food shelves, and community meal sites across the state to spread the word about 3SquaresVT! We are providing brown paper bags printed with a QR code and message about the program to our partners free of charge, so they can be used to package meals and groceries for customers. We piloted this project last year to explore creative, collaborative, and useful ways to do outreach. It intends to draw new participants to 3SquaresVT, and provide shoppers with a free environmentally friendly bag to carry small grocery orders. This is our second year doing this project and look forward to bringing along new partnerships. If you are interested in having paper bags delivered to your store, please reach out to Mariana Sears via email: msears@hungerfreevt.org

Donating food to pig farmers?

Only non-meat food scraps can be fed to pigs –no meat, fish, oils, or their juices. This rule helps prevent serious diseases like Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease.

If you plan to donate, set clear protocols to keep scraps free of meat contamination and packaging. Contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's Animal Health Office at (802) 828-2421 to ensure your practices meet safety standards.

Eggs and dairy are fine for pigs, and chickens can eat all food scraps, including meat. Learn more by checking out the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's Guidance on Feeding Food Scraps to Pigs.

Reminder: The Vermont Department of Labor Announces Minimum Wage Increase Starting January 2025

Starting January 1, 2025, Vermont's minimum wage will increase from \$13.67 to \$14.01 per hour, with the tipped minimum wage rising from \$6.84 to \$7.01 per hour. Employers paying the tipped minimum wage must ensure that employees' total earnings, including tips, meet or exceed the standard minimum wage. If tips fall short, employers are required to cover the difference. These annual adjustments are mandated by Vermont law (21 V.S.A. § 384) and take effect at the start of each year.

Labor Law Posters

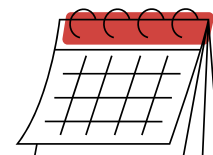
As a valued VRGA member, you will once again receive a complimentary labor law poster in 2025. Due to unforeseen delays at the state level, distribution of the posters will be postponed by a few weeks. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@vtrga.org.

2025 VRGA Events

Legislative Day – April 2025

Scholarship Golf Tournament – June 4, 2025

Annual Meeting – September 25, 2025



Von Trapp Brewing Wins Gold and 'Brewery of the Year' at 2024 Great American Beer Festival"

Von Trapp Brewing, located in Stowe, Vermont, was awarded a Gold Medal for its Helles Golden Lager and named "Brewery & Brewer of the Year" in the 15,001-100,000 barrel category at the 2024 Great American Beer Festival (GABF). The brewery, founded by Johannes von Trapp and inspired by the family from "The Sound of Music," is part of the Trapp Family Lodge and produces its beers using Vermont spring water. Additionally, Von Trapp Brewing partners with Farrell Distributing to bring their award-winning beers to a wider audience across the region.



We're excited to share an exclusive opportunity for VRGA members! Our partner is offering 3 months of free payroll services—a fantastic chance to streamline your payroll at no cost.

How to Take Advantage:

👉 [Sign up](#) before January 2025 to claim this limited-time offer.

Champlain Orchards Launches 'Cider for Good' to Combat Hunger in Local Communities

Champlain Orchards, an eco-certified apple orchard in Shoreham, Vermont, has launched the "Cider for Good" initiative to combat hunger in local communities. For every 4-pack of Champlain Orchards hard cider sold, the orchard will donate 1/4 lb of its sustainably grown apples to regional food banks. This program, which began on October 1, 2024, aims to provide fresh, nutritious apples to food banks across Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Delaware. The initiative reflects Champlain Orchards' long-standing commitment to sustainability and community nourishment, building on its legacy of regenerative farming practices. Customers can support the cause by purchasing Champlain Orchards hard cider, available at local retailers and online.



Association Staff is here to help!

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