

NOZZLE & WRENCH

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON DC, MARYLAND & DELAWARE SERVICE STATION & AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR ASSOCIATION



VOLUME 21 / ISSUE 5
MAY 2022

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- >> The Maryland Automotive Repair Facilities Law
- >> Best Practices to Boost Your Social Media Presence

The state will not start collecting contributions from employer and employees until October of 2023.

KIRK'S CORNER

Maryland Family & Sick Leave – Is it a Done Deal?



By Kirk McCauley,
Director Of Member
Relations &
Government Affairs

Family and Sick leave bill as you know was passed by legislators and Governor Hogan vetoed. Legislators quickly overrode his veto. The state will not start collecting contributions from employer and employees until October of 2023. The employee can not start seeing benefits until January of 2025.

This gives us a chance to amend this bill in 2023 legislation session and puts an exclamation mark on November elections. 680 hours that travel with employee is something that ripe for change, as is 12 and possible 24 weeks. Democratic leadership ignored stake holders and their own party members and forced this bill through. We need to look at who voted on this and work to get them out of office.

Check with WMDC/CAR before giving sign space to candidates.

Delaware Family and Medical Leave

The Delaware house and General assembly approved [SS2 to SB1](#) this past week. The bill creates a paid family and medical leave insurance program funded by employer and employee contributions via a payroll tax. It now awaits signature by the Governor who has indicated he will sign.

While this bill is not ideal for an employer, it was amended heavily from its original form. DE legislators recognized the impossible burdens the original bill put on business.

- **Covered individuals:** workers entitled to benefits under the bill include those who have been employed

Continues on page 4



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Parental leave: workers at employers with 10 or more employees will be eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid leave in the first year after the birth, adoption, or placement through foster care of a child.

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for at least 12 months by the employer and worked for at least 1,250 hours during the previous 12-month period.

- **Parental leave:** workers at employers with 10 or more employees will be eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid leave in the first year after the birth, adoption, or placement through foster care of a child.
- **Medical and family caregiving leave:** workers at employers with 25 or more employees will be eligible for up to 6 weeks of paid leave in a 24-month period for a documented serious health condition of the worker, parent, spouse, or child of a family member or a qualifying exigency related to a parent, spouse, child being called to active military duty (as defined in the [FMLA](#)).
- **Benefits:** workers may apply for benefits beginning January 1, 2026. Employees will be eligible for 80% of their wages, up to \$900 per week until 2027 when future increases will be tied to the consumer price index (CPI).
- **Contributions:** the rate for parental leave benefits will be 0.32% of an employee's wages; the rate of medical leave benefits will be 0.4% of an employee's wages; the rate of family caregiving benefits will be 0.08% of an employee's wages – contributions begin January 1, 2025.
- **Seasonal exemption:** Businesses that are closed for 30 consecutive days or more per year are exempt from the

program. This was added by the house as an amendment and senate concurred.

- **Opt-in:** Employers with <25 employees may opt into medical and family caregiving leave program and employers with <10 employees may opt into parental leave program.
- **Private Plan:** an employer may file for an approval of a private plan provided it meets all the requirements and provisions of the state's plans.

Delaware Predictive Scheduling

The city of Wilmington Delaware is ready to submit a predictive scheduling bill, I have not seen a bill yet but just giving our Delaware members a heads up and I will get you all the information as soon as presented to council and assigned to a committee.

Food and Drug Administration – Ban on Menthol and Flavored Cigars

An FDA ban on menthol and flavored cigars will not go into effect right away.

The next step will be a comment period that will run from May 4 through July 5. The FDA will also hold public listening sessions June 13 and 15.

The agency is then expected to take time to review the comments before a rule becomes finalized.

The rule would take effect one year after the final version is published. Most likely tobacco companies will also try to stop

the ban by suing the agency, as the companies have with past tobacco-control legislation. Bottom line is the ban will not take effect until middle of 2023 or even 2024 and if tobacco companies file lawsuits, who knows.

This regulation would not make it illegal to possess or smoke menthol cigarettes or flavored cigars. The regulation does make it illegal to sell, import or retail the products.

This sounds so much like marijuana products that set up war lords, gangs, and large smuggling operations. A trail of crime and untaxed dollars follows these types of bans. This would accomplish something else, the expansion of illegal sales where they check no I.D. Our retailers checking I.D. are the best deterrent to youth smoking tobacco. As they say, 'follow the money' and in this case, big money will be made, along with associated crime.

Something just does not seem right when states an D.C. are bending over backwards to legalizing a mind altering drug (marijuana) and Federal Government is proposing a ban on menthol.

[Fact Sheet: Proposed product standards to prohibit menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes and all characterizing flavors \(other than tobacco\) in cigars \(fda.gov\)](#)

[Guide to Submitting Comments to the FDA | FDA](#) ■

2022 Legislative Score Card

| | | | |
|--|--|---------|--------|
| <u>HB0008</u> (<u>SB0275</u> / <u>CH0048</u>) | Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022) | Oppose | Passed |
| <u>HB0072</u> (<u>SB0078</u>) | Maryland Wage and Hour Law and Maryland Wage Payment and Collection Law – Revisions (Maryland Wage Protection Act) | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0135</u> | Environment – Single-Use Plastics – Restrictions | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0171</u> (<u>SB0135</u>) | Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0299</u> (<u>SB0224</u>) | Labor and Employment - Employment Standards and Conditions - Definition of Employer | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0356</u> | Prince George's County - Alcoholic Beverages - Licenses for Supermarkets PG 304-22 | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0431</u> (<u>SB0530</u>) | Maryland Fair Scheduling Act | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0442</u> (<u>SB0249</u>) | Baltimore City - Cigarettes, Other Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices - Local Laws Authorization | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0477</u> (<u>SB0099</u>) | Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices – Local Law Authorization | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0496</u> | Labor and Employment - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Establishment (Time to Care Act 2022) | Oppose | Passed |
| <u>HB0506</u> (<u>SB0603</u>) | Constitutional Amendment - Beer and Wine Licenses - Retail Grocery Establishments | support | Failed |
| <u>HB0577</u> | Motor Fuel Tax and Sales and Use Tax - Tax Holiday | Neutral | Failed |
| <u>HB0628</u> | Employment – Workers' Compensation and Workplace Discrimination – Use of Medical Cannabis | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0640</u> | Labor and Employment - Healthy Working Families Act - Application | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0695</u> (<u>SB0552</u>) | Environment – Climate Crisis Plan – Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022) | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0698</u> (<u>SB0721</u>) | Labor and Employment - State Minimum Wage Rate - Increase | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0708</u> | Comprehensive Climate Solutions | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0789</u> | Prince George's County - Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products - Licensing Conditions | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0800</u> (<u>SB0565</u>) | Public Safety – Emergency Management – Price Gouging Consumer Protections | Oppose | Failed |
| | | | |
| <u>HB0831</u> | Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Commercial and Residential Buildings | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB0835</u> | Retail Service Stations – New Construction – Setbacks and Electric Charging Stations | Neutral | Failed |
| <u>HB0858</u> | Alcoholic Beverages - Class A Licenses - Retail Grocery Establishments | Support | Failed |
| <u>HB0880</u> (<u>SB0931</u>) | Environment - Impact of Actions on Climate, Labor, and Environmental Justice | Oppose | Failed |
| <u>HB1179</u> | State Lottery - Sales of Lottery Tickets and Tickets from Instant Ticket Lottery Machines - Commissions | Support | Passed |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---------|--------|--|
| <u>HB1239</u> | Environment - Plastic and Glass Products - Postconsumer Recycled Content Program | Neutral | Failed | |
| <u>HB1333</u> | Motor Vehicles - Modified Vehicle Exhaust System - Penalties | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>HB1341</u> | Prince George's County – Other Tobacco Products and Electronic Smoking Devices – Requirements and Limitations | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>HB1406</u> | Alcoholic Beverages - Issuance of Class A Licenses | Support | Failed | |
| <u>HB1486 / CH0001</u> <u>(SB1010 / CH0002)</u> | Motor Fuel Taxes – Tax-Free Period | Neutral | Passed | |
| <u>SB0066</u> | Labor and Employment - Hiring - Education Requirements (Give Me A Chance - Job Opportunities Act of 2022) | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0078</u> <u>(HB0072)</u> | Maryland Wage and Hour Law and Maryland Wage Payment and Collection Law - Revisions (Maryland Wage Protection Act) | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0099</u> <u>(HB0477)</u> | Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices – Local Law Authorization | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0135</u> <u>(HB0171)</u> | Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0224</u> <u>(HB0299)</u> | Labor and Employment - Employment Standards and Conditions - Definition of Employer | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0249</u> <u>(HB0442)</u> | Baltimore City - Cigarettes, Other Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices - Local Laws Authorization | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0275 / CH0048</u> <u>(HB0008)</u> | Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022) | Opposed | Passed | |
| <u>SB0322</u> | Gas Price Gouging Act | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0528 / CH0038</u> | Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 - Amended | Opposed | Passed | |
| <u>SB0530</u> <u>(HB0431)</u> | Maryland Fair Scheduling Act | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0546</u> | Vehicle Equipment – Transfer of Catalytic Converter – Regulation | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0552</u> <u>(HB0695)</u> | Environment - Climate Crisis Plan - Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022) | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0565</u> <u>(HB0800)</u> | Public Safety - Emergency Management - Price Gouging Consumer Protections | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0603</u> <u>(HB0506)</u> | Constitutional Amendment – Beer and Wine Licenses – Retail Grocery Establishments | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0721</u> <u>(HB0698)</u> | Labor and Employment - State Minimum Wage Rate - Acceleration | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0931</u> <u>(HB0880)</u> | Environment - Impact of Actions on Climate, Labor, and Environmental Justice | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB0990</u> | Electronic Smoking Devices - Prohibitions and Requirements | Opposed | Failed | |
| <u>SB1010 / CH0002</u> <u>(HB1486 / CH0001)</u> | Motor Fuel Taxes - Tax-Free Period | Neutral | Passed | |



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Hello Folks - The 4th Annual Charity Golf outing will be on June 14th at Renditions. Please join us in support of the Alzheimer's Association, to raise money and awareness to this very important cause. I hope the golfers in our WMDA Family will take a day off to play some golf, mingle with friends, colleagues and just have a Super FUN day!



Swapna Sripada
WMDA/CAR

\$169/Golfer and \$650/Foursome, the more the merrier right? So spread the word – Its time to Golf!

I'm counting on you! Lets make this bigger and better than last year!

I also want to give a shout-out to all the repair shops that participated in this years Training Day. You took the time to invest in yourself and your team – Kudos for that!

The surveys that were turned in tell us that we didn't disappoint. All the trainers/coaches this year got a 5 star rating for topic, content and engagement. Personally I wish more shops took advantage of this opportunity. Please take a few minutes and drop me a note on how we can make this event better, what topics you want us to offer, more technical, more management – **we are listening** and will make changes/additions as needed.

See you at our next event!

Swapna Sripada
Director of Operations

Training Day 2022



It's Not Just a Name.



By Sandi Weaver
BA Auto Care, Inc.

In 2016 we decided to change the name of our shop to aid in our online marketing. We went from British American Auto Care to BA Auto Care. For years we have worked on vehicles other than British and American vehicles and we were well known to those who have been in the area for a long time but most people thought we only worked on British cars, not even American. Shortening the name to BA Auto Care helped with our online presence and took the “Oh, you work on Honda’s too” out of the equation.

While we had a marking company look into using the shortened version of our name, they weren’t familiar with Trademarks and how all that worked. Fast forward a few years and I had the pleasure of meeting Ruy Garcia-Zamor who is an Intellectual Property attorney. I honestly couldn’t have told you what intellectual property was or why a small business would need the use of his services. I know what Trademarks and patents are but I also thought Trademarks were for large companies, not small, family owned businesses. Ruy was giving a presentation and I realized we needed to Trademark our name and we needed to do it before another repair shop opened and used our reputation to gain customers. He spoke about a small coffee shop run by a husband and wife who were sent notice of the use of a large coffee shop’s name. The small shop had to change anything and everything that had their name on it such as their website, shirts, signage and more. For a small company, that can cost a lot of money.

Or the other side, don’t let a new company come into your market, use a similar name to yours and mooch off your hard earned reputation. If they were to Trademark the name before you, you would have to change your business name and such.

Don’t let someone take away what you worked your whole life for. If you haven’t talked to an Intellectual Property attorney about your company’s name and tagline, I highly recommend looking into it and making sure you are protected. ■



...we needed to Trademark our name and we needed to do it before another repair shop opened and used our reputation to gain customers.

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Refreshments will be available on the course. WMDA/CAR will assist in pairing individual registered golfers to make a foursome if requested.



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The requirements as to how the notice of customer rights is to be displayed, along with other information to be included in the notice...

The Maryland Automotive Repair Facilities Law

By James L. Parsons, Jr., Lynott, Lynott & Parsons, P.A.

The Maryland Automotive Repair Facilities Law (ARFL) is codified as Subtitle 10 of Title 14 of the Maryland Commercial Law Article. The ARFL was originally enacted in 1974, and contains requirements applicable to repair work performed by automotive repair facilities for their customers. Those requirements include a written estimate of work, if requested by the customer (§14-1002), an invoice describing the repairs performed (§14-1003), the return of all replaced parts (§14-1004), and a prohibition of charging the customer for repairs not originally authorized or requested by the customer (§14-1006). Section 14-1008 of the ARFL requires that, before beginning repair work, the automotive repair facility must give the customer a copy of a form authorizing the repairs informing the customer, among other things, of the following “customer rights”:

- (1) That a customer:
 - (i) May request a written estimate for repairs which cost in excess of \$50; and
 - (ii) May not be charged any amount ten percent in excess of the written estimate without the customer’s consent;
- (2) That the customer is entitled to the return of any replaced parts except when parts are required to be returned to the manufacturer under a warranty agreement; and
- (3) That repairs not originally authorized by the customer may not be charged to the customer without the customer’s consent.

ARFL, §14-1008(a). The requirements as to how the notice of customer rights is to be displayed, along with other information to be included in the notice, are also set forth in Section 14-1008. Section 14-1009 of the ARFL provides that a violation of the ARFL is an unfair or deceptive practice within the meaning of the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (CPA), contained in Title 13 of the Commercial Law Article. The CPA is enforced by the Division of Consumer Protection of the Office of the Attorney General, but also allows a “person aggrieved” to pursue an action for damages. A person that violates the CPA may be subject to fines of not more than \$1000 for each violation, and may also be subject to criminal penalties.

Rogers Refrigeration Co., Inc. v. Pulliam’s Garage, Inc., 66 Md.App. 675 (1986) is one of the few reported cases that addresses the application of the ARFL. In that case, Pulliam’s Garage, Inc. (Pulliam’s), an automobile repair shop, sued Rogers Refrigeration Co., Inc. (Rogers), a commercial refrigeration equipment service and installation company, for \$5,839.51, which was the balance owed on the running account for the repairs of Rogers’ fleet vehicles. After a bench trial, the Circuit Court for Prince George’s County found that Rogers had ordered the repairs, and that they were necessary and properly performed at a reasonable cost by Pulliam’s. Accordingly, the trial court entered a judgment in





favor of Pulliam's in the amount of \$5,839.51.

Rogers appealed the trial court's decision to the Court of Special Appeals of Maryland, challenging the judgment on the ground that Pulliam's failure to comply with the ARFL barred its recovery. Specifically, Rogers contended that Pulliam's failed to return the replaced parts when its vehicles were picked up after repairs were performed in violation of Section 14-1004, and that the invoices sent to Rogers following the repairs did not contain the notice of customer rights required by Section 14-1008.

Pulliam's responded to Rogers' argument by claiming that the ARFL did not apply to the work done for Rogers as it was a commercial, as opposed to an individual consumer, account. The court rejected that argument, finding that the ARFL protects commercial customers as well as individual consumers who receive services from an automotive repair facility.

The court then addressed Rogers' argument regarding the alleged violations of the ARFL. As to the alleged failure to tender the replaced parts as required by Section 14-1004, while the issue was disputed before the trial court, the appellate court found that the trial judge was not erroneous in concluding that the replacement parts had been returned. As to the alleged failure to comply with Section 14-1008, it was undisputed

that the invoices sent to Rogers for repairs of over \$50 did not contain the required notice of customer rights. Rogers argued that the failure to include the notice rendered the contract for repairs unenforceable as against public policy. The court disagreed, finding that the failure to give the notice was not a "material breach" so as to excuse payment by Rogers. In making this finding, the court relied on the facts that (i) the trial court had found that all of the repairs were necessary and performed at a reasonable cost; (ii) there was no evidence that Rogers suffered any damages as a result of the lack of the notice; and (iii) there was an inconsistency between Rogers' emphasis on expeditious service of its fleet of vehicles and the delay that would have been caused by the preparation of a written pre-repair estimate for each repair. The court therefore found that the failure to give the notice required by Section 14-1008 was inconsequential, and

the judgment in favor of Pulliam's was affirmed.

The *Rogers* case illustrates the importance of a repair shop operator being familiar with and complying with the terms of the ARFL, both as to repairs for individual customers and for commercial fleet accounts. While Pulliam's was fortunate that the court found that the failure to provide the required notice was inconsequential, the court may have reached a different conclusion under a different fact pattern. Auto repair shops should be aware that the failure to comply with the ARFL may result in an investigation by the Division of Consumer Protection of the Attorney General's office, a civil suit for monetary damages, or perhaps even a criminal prosecution. Auto repair shop owners should therefore familiarize themselves with the requirements of the ARFL and make sure that their shop adheres to those requirements. ■



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Best Practices to Boost Your Social Media Presence

Brought to you by Netdriven

What does your social media presence look like right now?

Is it sporadic or non-existent? Do you post regularly but still don't see much progress in your brand growth?

If you're wondering if social media really matters, it does. A survey by Sprout Social revealed **80%** of customers expect businesses to interact with them on social media. This expectation goes beyond just sharing a picture of your inventory once or twice a month. Your posts need to have *intent*.

The way you go about planning and executing your social media strategy makes all the difference in how much growth you see on your platforms. We're sharing some of our best practices to build your social media presence and boost audience engagement:

Align Your Platforms with Your Audience

Before you get started, you need to identify which social media platforms your business will focus on. Different platforms can attract different audiences, so let your audience type dictate where you'll build your presence. For example, both Instagram and Twitter attract a younger audience base than Facebook – something to keep in mind if a lot of your customers are millennials versus Gen X-ers. Similarly, people who are looking to shop online are likely to browse on Facebook, whereas people who want to form connections or stay informed on industry news may choose Twitter or LinkedIn.

If you're not sure who your audience is (or don't know much about their interests), use these two methods to learn more about them:

- **Study your current customers:** Your social media audience will be a reflection of the people already visiting your store. How old are they? How much do they spend? What do they buy? What do you know about their interests?
- **Use your website tools:** Review the analytics from your website and any existing social media platforms to see who's interacting with your content. Refer to your analytics periodically to know if customer interests and behaviors evolve.



Develop a Content Plan

So, what should you post on social media? Again, think about what you're trying to achieve (more sales, better audience engagement, thought leadership, any combination of these) and make sure your content aligns with your objectives. Here are some options:

- **Curated:** Reshare posts and articles from other sources (be sure to credit them by resharing, citing or tagging the original poster)
- **User-generated:** Reshare customer posts and online reviews (with permission)
- **Educational:** Create content that answers common auto-related questions – after

The way you go about planning and executing your social media strategy makes all the difference in how much growth you see on your platforms.



all, many shoppers use social media like a second search engine

- **Visual:** Share industry-relevant photos, videos and memes (bonus! Posting visuals helps your content stand out more in your audience's feed)

Aim for diversity in your post topics so you don't fall into a rut. The "rule of thirds" is a great way to keep your content fresh and interesting: 1/3 sales and promotions, 1/3 educational resources or industry news and 1/3 funny or entertaining.

Also, don't push yourself to post every day, as that can fatigue your audience. Posting an average of three times a week is sufficient. And if you find yourself struggling to carve out time to post, look into a posting calendar. Some platforms, such as Facebook, have built-in tools that allow you to schedule posts in advance, so you can line up your content and be good to go for the whole month! You can also look into a third-party platform to plan and schedule your posts across all your social media platforms.

Include High-Quality Visuals

Social media is driven by visuals, and posts that include a photo, graphic or video are more likely to generate leads. Why? Because people are 65% more likely to retain information that includes an image (as reported by Hootsuite), and that means your content will stick in their brains longer during the shopping process.

Make sure any visuals you post are in line with your brand

guidelines and add value to your content. If you're taking your own photos for social media, consider these tips to create good-quality images:

- Have a single focal point (ie, subject)
- Don't worry about having your subject perfectly centered
- Use natural lighting and balance with contrast
- Keep it simple and easy to understand
- Don't overedit – natural-looking images get more likes

If you decide to add overlay text to your images, make sure the message is bold, legible and concise. Or, if you want to include a longer message, you can animate the image so that pockets of text appear and disappear one at a time. Choose a font and color (or color combination) that are easy to read. If you're mixing fonts, pair a serif with a sans serif, and avoid green-red or blue-yellow color combinations.

Encourage Audience Participation

Social media operates a lot like a dinner party – as the host of your content, you should encourage conversation amongst your attendees. After all, the greatest measure of social media success is an *engaged* audience. This includes liking, commenting on and resharing your content.

Here are some tips to increase your audience engagement:

- **Set an actionable goal:** What do you want to achieve from your audience? More sales leads? Feedback on your services? Customers who are

better educated on their auto needs? Setting objectives will help you frame your social content strategy.

- **Track post engagement:** Keep a record of how many likes and comments each post generates so you know what resonates most with your audience.
- **Create and share valuable content:** Make sure your posts are worth reading – share industry news, educational articles and how-to guides.
- **Turn customers into brand advocates:** Consumers are highly receptive to user-generated content. Get customers and prospects alike excited about your posts by featuring recent buyers and encouraging customers to post photos of their recent auto work results.
- **Be responsive online:** Make sure you're responding to any direct messages and comments on your posts to encourage your audience to reach out. This is also a good customer service habit, as most consumers who contact a business online expect to hear back within a day, if not earlier. Drive results through best practices. If you're still hesitant to dive into social media, consider WordPress' finding that 78% of small businesses attract new customers and engage existing ones through social platforms. With the right habits and strategies in place, your business could be part of that statistic, and you could be outperforming your competitors in audience growth and lead generation. ■

SSDA-AT Sends American Energy Leadership Letter to President Biden



By Roy Littlefield IV

With the ongoing energy crisis, WMDA/CAR being represented by SSDA-AT sent a joint letter to President Biden with API (American Petroleum Institute).

Increased costs for motor fuels and home heating are among the most significant financial obligations our citizens face. Coupled with overall inflation, which is compounded by surging energy prices, Americans are paying more for all goods and services – from a gallon of milk to an Uber ride – as manufacturers and service providers try to recover their energy costs.

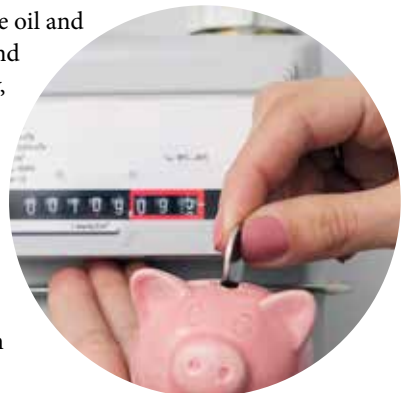
It's important to remember that the U.S. led the world in oil and natural gas production with record highs in 2019, and the benefits of that status was shared by producing and non-producing states alike. The oil and natural gas industry comprised more than 11.3 million total jobs or 5.6 percent of total U.S. employment. This accounted for more than \$892.7 billion in labor income, or 6.8 percent of our nation's labor income.

The industry represents a significant part of our nation's economic and fiscal future, and our energy independence hinges on sound policy that incentivizes resource development, modernizes energy infrastructure, and streamlines burdensome regulations.

Yet, despite the crisis in Ukraine, the inflation crippling our return to economic normalcy, and demand for petroleum products far outpacing supply, policymakers continue to hinder the oil and natural gas industry's efforts to increase production and reestablish our nation's energy independence, stability, and security.

In the letter, SSDA-AT stated that policymakers and the Biden administration could help ensure accessible, affordable, and reliable U.S. energy by doing the following:

- Provide certainty on oil and natural gas leasing by compelling the Department of Interior (DOI) to meet deadlines and honor its obligation to lease on federal lands and waters.
- Permit energy infrastructure and halt the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's increased regulatory barriers for approving natural gas pipelines.



Increased costs for motor fuels and home heating are among the most significant financial obligations our citizens face.



Without hyperbole, the need for abundant, dependable, and affordable energy has never been more important for our nation and the world – now and in the future.

- Execute the laws that mandate the DOI to complete a long-term offshore program to avoid unnecessary production and development disruption. No offshore lease sales can be held without the five-year program in place and the next program, which should be in place by July 1, is severely behind schedule, and will not be finalized by the time the current program expires.

Without hyperbole, the need for abundant, dependable, and affordable energy has never been more important for our nation and the world – now and in the future. The U.S. Energy Information Administration expects that natural gas could provide 34 percent of U.S. primary energy demand in 2050, and the world's energy use in 2040 will still depend on oil and natural gas. The world needs energy leadership, and the U.S. is positioned to reassume the role.

SSDA-AT looks forward to collaborating with President Biden and his administration on efforts to support policies that ensure long-term American energy leadership, security, and progress, including those that result in the continued operation of existing oil and natural gas pipelines, the construction of new pipelines, the resumption of consistent, credible federal lease sales, and the immediate preparation of a new five-year program to guide future offshore leasing. ■

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DOL Announces Additional Sessions on Overtime Regulations



By Roy Littlefield III

The Department of Labor (“DOL”) is actively considering changes to the federal overtime rules and exemptions. Below are details to RSVP for the listening sessions. SSDA-AT will be represented at the May 13 listening session. We would encourage any WMDA/CAR members that are interested in this issue to participate in one of the listening sessions and to share the information with the DOL.

The Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division previously announced that it is reviewing the regulations that implement the Fair Labor Standard Act’s minimum wage and overtime exemptions for bona fide executive, administrative, and professional employees.

In the last few months, DOL has held multiple listening sessions, including participating in a Small Business Roundtable with the SBA Office of Advocacy.

SSDA-AT has participated in these roundtables.

DOL has now announced additional virtual Overtime listening sessions for May and June 2022, for both worker and employer stakeholders. These sessions are organized by region.

Dates and times for each listening session is available on DOL.gov. To participate, you can register for an Overtime Listening Session for Workers and Advocates under the How to Participate section.

These are public events.

If you have questions, please send an email to OTSessionInquiries@dol.gov.

In this event notice, the agency seeks stakeholder input on issues such as:

- The appropriate salary level above which the exemptions for bona fide executive, administrative, or professional employees may apply.
- The costs and benefits of increasing the salary level to employers and employees, including increasing wages and reducing litigation costs.
- The best methodology for updating the salary level, and the appropriate frequency of updates.
- Whether other changes to the overtime regulations are warranted.

In 2016, the Labor Department’s sweeping overhaul to the overtime rule required employers to pay time-and-a-half to their employees who worked more than 40 hours in a given week and earned less than \$47,476 a year. This rule was blocked by a federal judge a week before implementation and never defended by the proceeding administration, ultimately failing to ever be enacted. We are concerned with what a current proposal might entail.

SSDA-AT plans to be involved and submitted comments on any proposed changes to the overtime regulations. We will continue to report on developments. ■



The costs and benefits of increasing the salary level to employers and employees, including increasing wages and reducing litigation costs.

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ELECTION 2022: **WMDA/CAR PAC needs funds to Participate**

Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller, along with delegates and senators are up for election in Maryland.

- ▶ **Ban on menthol cigarettes** in District of Columbia means there will be copycat bills in Maryland and Delaware this year.
- ▶ California **bans gas powered cars** by 2035, will MD, DE, or DC be next?
- ▶ Baltimore council members want to **ban new service stations** in the city, ban plastics, Styrofoam & sugary drinks. They have shut down many retailers with pad locks on doors, blaming business for crime. Police are telling our retailers you are on your own, hire security guards. They need to focus on crime, not plastic bags. The absurdity of actions like this underscores the need for new legislators.
- ▶ Labor and employee bills in all three jurisdictions would add thousands of dollars in **payroll cost** per year. While we have been successful in stopping or amending most bills, they will all be back this year.
- ▶ **Right to Repair** – New cars manufactured are installing devices in vehicles that send information over wireless networks to dealerships automatically.

As absurd as some of these bills are, they are real and affect all our members. These issues will be or already are in the legislative process. We need legislators who support retail business, do not be on the side lines.

Support your PAC and PROTECT your business.

We suggest \$150 per location however, any amount is welcome.

Please send contributions to: WMDAPAC 1532 Pointer Ridge Place, Suite F Bowie, MD 20716

Your fellow business owners and PAC officers,

Rick Agoris, *PAC Chairman*

Riaz Ahmad, *PAC Treasurer*

