

TRAINING DAY 2017 A HUGE SUCCESS!

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**SAVE
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EDITORIAL

It's Time to Repeal the Estate Tax

by Roy Littlefield

For as long as I can remember, we have been walking the halls of congress trying to repeal the unfair estate tax.

Over the years I have seen an increasing number of service station dealers and automotive repair operators purchase their business. It is almost un-American, at least in my opinion, that the owner cannot pass the business on to a family member because of the unfair and prohibitive tax.

With a Republican President and a Republican congress, we have a legitimate shot at repealing the tax!

Congress is scheduled to soon take up major tax reform. Both the Republican "Blueprint" Congressional plan and President Trump's plan call for the repeal of the estate tax.

Is there really a chance for comprehensive tax reform this year? It's possible for the first time in a decade. There is a real pent up demand on the part of Republicans to simplify the tax code, make it more pro-growth and reduce tax rates. Their plan is to tackle tax reform using the budget reconciliation process with the 2018 budget that is expected to be released sometime late this summer (2017). Using budget reconciliation would allow tax reform to be passed in the Senate with just 51 votes because debate on reconciliation bills is time limited, eliminating the potential for a filibuster (which takes 60 votes to break). In theory, it should be relatively easy for the Republicans to get tax reform through the House, the Senate (because of reconciliation) and to get the President to sign the bill.

Any downside to using budget reconciliation to get tax reform through the Senate? Yes. Any tax provision passed

under the budget reconciliation process that would lose revenue beyond the budget window (almost always 10 years) must expire at the end of the budget window. You might remember when federal estate taxes were repealed in 2010 and then sprung back into being in 2011. That's because the 10 year budget window ran out in 2011 and if the provision had continued past the 10 year window it would have lost tax revenue so it had to expire. The same tax bill that had estate tax repeal also contained very favorable retirement plan provisions such as increasing the amount that an individual could contribute to a retirement plan. Those favorable retirement plan provisions remained after 2010 because they were later passed again by the House and the Senate (without the benefit of budget reconciliation) as part of separate legislation during the 10 year window.

What could stop tax reform? What could stop tax reform this year, and maybe even next year, is Congress running out of time. Congress could run out of bandwidth if it ends up spending the entire year figuring out a replacement plan for the Affordable Care Act (ACA), how to deal with the wall on our southern border and immigration, what to do with our infrastructure and nominating a Supreme Court justice, among other issues. Many of these issues, other than tax reform, will require 60 votes in the Senate to get passed which means that any bill getting through the Senate will have to be acceptable to a number of Democratic Senators in addition to most, if not all, of the Republican Senators. Moreover, the Republicans have already moved forward to repeal and replace much of the ACA through the budget reconciliation process using the 2017 budget, which would normally mean they would want to solve health care (no small feat) before they moved on to tax reform.

What is comprehensive tax reform anyway? Comprehensive tax reform means that the corporate tax provisions, individual tax provisions, provisions dealing with pass-through entities, and international tax provisions would all be modified (hopefully simplified) at the same time. Last year, it looked like some of the corporate tax provisions would be modified for C corps but it was ultimately decided that Congress couldn't reduce the C corp tax rate without reducing the tax rates applicable to the pass-through entities and that such broader tax changes


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were just too much to tackle last year.

What is likely to happen to individual taxes? Based on the House Republicans' Tax Reform "Blueprint" and President Trump's plan (which are about 80% the same):

There will be 3 lower personal tax rates:

- **0 – 12%** for married couples filing jointly with taxable income below \$75,000.
- **25%** for married couples filing jointly with taxable income between \$75,000 and \$225,000.
- **33%** for married couples filing jointly with taxable income above \$225,000.

The thresholds are half the above amounts for single taxpayers and the head of household rates are eliminated.

The standard deduction will be increased:

The standard deduction would be increased to **\$24,000 for a joint filer, \$18,000 for a single taxpayer with a child and \$12,000 for a single filer** under the House Blueprint. Trump's plan would be a bit higher - \$30,000 for a joint filer and \$15,000 for a single filer.

Personal exemptions will be eliminated.

Trump's plan would cap itemized deductions at **\$200,000 for joint filers and \$100,000 for single filers.** The Blueprint would not cap itemized deductions.

Reduced rates for capital gains, dividends and interest income.

Under the House Blueprint, the tax rates for net capital gains, dividends and interest income will be cut in half – so subject to a tax rate of 6%, 12.5% or 16.5% depending on the tax bracket. Trump's plan states that it would not change the current capital gains rates.

AMT would be eliminated.

The 3.8% net investment income tax which was enacted to help pay for the Affordable Care Act would be eliminated.

Estate tax and generation skipping transfer tax would be repealed.

Neither the Blueprint nor Trump's plan mentions whether the gift tax would also be repealed. It is also not clear whether a new "death capital gains tax" would be imposed under the House Blueprint. Under Trump's plan, it appears that a new "death capital gains tax" would be imposed but not on the first \$10,000,000 of capital gains. This seems like a high enough number to protect many small businesses but, based on what has happened in the past, we are concerned that this number over time would be reduced in order to raise revenue.

The mortgage interest and the charitable contribution

deduction would be preserved for those itemizing deductions under the House Blueprint.

How will the Blueprint and Trump's plan reform business taxes?

Reduced Business Tax Rates – major change for pass-through entities and sole proprietors.

Blueprint: A new concept, "active business income" from pass-through entities and sole proprietors is capped at a 25% tax rate. Active business income is the income remaining after deducting the "reasonable compensation for services" for the owner(s). This means that for owners of a pass-through entity, an amount equal to a reasonable compensation for the owners' services would be taxed at the regular personal income tax rate for each owner and the remainder of the income generated by the company would be considered to be "active business income," which would be taxed at a rate no higher than 25%. This is a concept that the SBLC started promoting years ago.

Tax rate for C corps would drop to 20%.

Trump's plan: Business tax rate drops to 15% for both C corps and "active business income" for pass-through entities. It appears that the same active business income concept from the Blueprint is included in Trump's plan for pass-through entities though Trump's



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rate would be 10% less than that in the Blueprint.

There are lots of questions surrounding how "active business income" and "reasonable compensation for services" would be determined. If we end up with a lower tax rate on active business income, it's easy to imagine the slew of new regulations, IRS challenges, and court cases, particularly on what is considered to be "reasonable" compensation. Ultimately though, the concept is sound.

Businesses allowed to expense investments:

Blueprint: All U.S. businesses would be permitted to expense investments in all tangible and intangible assets, except land. But note – the Blueprint eliminates the deduction for interest expense associated with the debt incurred to finance the investment (though it can be deducted up to the corporation's interest income). More on this below.

Trump's plan: Manufacturers would be able to deduct 100% of asset acquisition and production costs but would not be permitted to deduct interest expenses.

AMT would be eliminated under both plans.

Most "special interest deductions and credits" other than the R&D credit would be eliminated. This would raise revenue and theoretically level the playing field.


Employer Based Retirement Plans:

Blueprint: Current tax incentives will be maintained but Ways and Means is directed to consolidate and reform the multiple retirement options "to provide effective and efficient incentives for savings and investments." The employer based retirement plan community has developed a number of ideas for simplification over the years, but this language appears to indicate that the flexibility that is now in the system and welcomed by employers would be diminished. Tax free savings accounts are also mentioned in the Blueprint – these accounts would have no restrictions on removing the money. If the proposal lowering the tax rate on "active business income" for pass-through entities becomes law then some modification on the tax rate for distributions from a retirement plan would be required, in order to keep these plans viable from a tax viewpoint. It's hard to imagine small business owners getting excited about a deduction for retirement plan contributions at a 25% rate and being taxed later at the personal rate of 33%. Unless distributions were also taxed at a 25% rate, it would be reasonable to assume business owners would close down the retirement plan and take the funds out at the 25% rate and then invest the dollars in assets which would be taxed at capital gains rates.


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LIFO will be preserved. The Blueprint directs Ways and Means to continue to “evaluate options for making the treatment of inventory more effective and efficient in the context of this new system.”

What would be the likely impact of eliminating the deduction for interest? Both Trump’s plan and the Blueprint favor equity over debt financing. At a minimum, this would have a significant impact on the real estate and financial industries. The Blueprint asks Ways and Means to “work to develop special rules for banks, insurance and leasing companies to take into account the role interest income and expense plays in their industry.”

The devil is in the details! Until we see the actual legislative language, we really don’t know how many of these provisions will actually work. Our guess is that as tax reform goes through Congress that the tax rates will end up higher and the deductions and credits will be reduced and that’s assuming that the Republicans in Congress can coalesce behind one plan. Because of the budget reconciliation process, many of the provisions may be phased in slowly over the ten-year budget window.

Outside factors, most notably what’s going to happen with replacing the ACA, could also have a significant impact on the timing and likelihood of tax reform.

Positive legislation for you and the business community should be realized in the tax reform effort. We have worked tirelessly for

many of these issues. Make your voices known, and let’s repeal the estate tax!

In Loving Memory

It is with a heavy heart that we would like to let you know of the passing of our long-time mechanic and friend Dominic Dillet.



Dominic had been employed at Bethesda Sunoco for the last 13 years. He always had a smile on his face and was quick with a joke. He always took great care of the customers and was an extremely talented mechanic.

He was a great friend to the community, a loving father and husband. He is survived by his wife Karin, son Nicholas, and daughter Danielle.

We will miss him dearly.



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ON THE LEGISLATIVE FRONT

Federal Report

by Roy Littlefield IV
Government Affairs Assistant

Last month, Senator Thune (R-SD), Congresswoman Noem (R-SD) and Congressman Bishop (D-GA) reintroduced the Death Tax Repeal Act for the 115th Congress (Senate Bill: S. 205 House Bill: H.R. 631). WMDA/CAR in conjunction with the Family Business Coalition sent a letter of support for the legislation signed by 133 organizations.

Estate Tax Repeal Remains a top priority for WMDA/CAR members.

WMDA/CAR also attended a Family Business Coalition meeting and heard directly from staff for Congresswoman Noem, Congressman Roskam, Chairman Brady, House Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority Whip Cornyn, and Senate Majority Leader McConnell. We

also heard from Jim Carter (Head of tax policy implantation for President Trump's transition team), Steve Entin (Tax Foundation), and Ryan Ellis (Conservative Reform Network).

Estate Tax Repeal is now in sight and we hope for passage in 2017 as a standalone bill or as a part of comprehensive tax reform.

*Estate Tax Repeal
is now in sight and
we hope for passage
in 2017...*

WMDA/CAR has been taking part in the ongoing efforts to form a White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB) under the Trump Administration. Recently, we wrote to the President to respectfully requesting that he sign an Executive Order authorizing the next White House Conference on Small Business.



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*This year we have
the opportunity to
change things in the
areas of business
and tax reforms
while continuing to
cut regulation
and prevent
new regulation.*

White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB) which has not taken place in over two decades. That is far too long to go without giving voice and a forum to America's small businesses which account for 99 percent of U.S. private sector employers and 64 percent of net new private sector jobs.

Last month, WMDA/CAR took part in several conference calls focused on the formation of the WHCSB.

WMDA/CAR also recently attended CPAC, the largest annual gathering of conservative activists from across the United States. It's an event that keeps growing, with attendance topping the 10,000 mark this year.

It's four days of speeches, panel discussions, breakout sessions, networking breakfasts, and dinners, all with plenty of patriotic music mixed in, where the crowd consists of leading conservative voices –

some of them elected officials, some best-selling authors or media stars, and other icons of the movement.

This year WMDA/CAR heard speeches at the conference from, President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in addition to Senator Ted Cruz, as well as many Representatives including: Ron DeSantis, Mike Burgess, Kevin Brady, Jody Hice, French Hill, Barry Loudermilk, Andy Biggs, Ken Buck, and Mark Walker. Over 100 speakers spoke at the event.

Tax reform, repeal of Obamacare, trade, foreign policy, and transportation were all topics of conversation over the four-day conference.

We will continue to update you on pending legislation. This year we have the opportunity to change things in the areas of business and tax reforms while continuing to cut regulation and prevent new regulation. ♦



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KIRK'S KORNER

Annapolis Legislative Update

by Kirk McCauley
Director of Member Relations & Government Affairs

With the Maryland legislative session at the half way mark, one thing is becoming perfectly clear. The democrats (majority) are pushing employee and labor bills.

Before the session started we were informed by Economic Matters and Finance committees that sick leave would come out of their committees and go to the floor for a full vote. Last year we were able to keep them from coming out of finance, so it never got to the floor.

The family leave act, aka sick leave, has come out of both committees with very little in amendments. Hours to qualify moved from 8 to 12; days worked to qualify moved from 90 to 106; and days required for employer to pay moved from 7 to 6. None of these changes moved the needle and are almost comical amendments. Now both committees will have to concur on amendments before the bill can go to floor.



The bill says businesses with 14 or fewer employees do not have to pay for days off, but you have to give unpaid days off and follow all other penalty and bookkeeping parts of the bill. This bill and similar bills on labor and employment say you must have an up-to-date employee handbook, an accounting system that tracks hours worked, PTO accrued or given, time off, and I'm sure we will add to the list by session's end (April 10). All leave should be changed over to personal time off (PTO), sick or annual. I will add to all this when the dust settles.

I will try to do a weekly update from here on until the session is over and highlight different bills. I will also include the District of Columbia and Delaware. ♦

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You're invited!

*Join fellow WMDA/CAR members
as we review the legislative session,
discuss benefits of membership and
network at our Annual Area Meetings.*

Dear WMDA/CAR Member:

2017 will bring changes to WMDA/CAR that we hope will serve you well and bring more value to your membership.

This year our area meetings will be held in April and May. The legislative session in Maryland will be over and we can expand on legislation that will affect you and how to deal with it from a business standpoint. Small business is under attack from very liberal legislators – they want to control every aspect of our payroll, sick leave, how we schedule and how we advertise for new employees. Come and get the latest information and ask your questions.

Come and discuss what you want from WMDA/CAR and what would make your membership more valuable. We encourage you to bring a non-member business (service station, convenience store, repair shop or potential vendor associate) with you to the meeting.

Breakfast will be provided and best of all, **it's FREE**. You're invited to attend any of the meetings listed below.

AREA MEETING #1

Thursday, April 27, 2017
9:30 a.m.

Area/County

Anne Arundel
PG
Eastern Shore

Location

Double-T Diner
12 Defense Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

AREA MEETING #2

Tuesday, May 2, 2017
9:30 a.m.

Area/County

Baltimore
Baltimore City
Hartford

Location

Double-T Diner
6300 Baltimore National Pike
Catonsville, MD 21228

AREA MEETING #3

Thursday, May 4, 2017
9:30 a.m.

Area/County

Howard
Frederick
Montgomery

Location

Bob Evans
21044 Frederick Road
Germantown, MD 20876

Please RSVP to vclancy@wmda.net and let her know which meeting you plan on attending.

Based on your overwhelming feedback, the WMDA/CAR
Convention & Trade Show will no longer be held in Ocean City.

That being said, a meeting venue in close proximity, with networking and
socializing opportunities, remains an extremely important priority for you.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS & SAVE THE DATE!

**WMDA/CAR will be hosting a
One-Day Tabletop Trade Show, Bull Roast & Awards Dinner**

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

**Martin's West
6817 Dogwood Road
Baltimore, MD**

Watch for more information to come!

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

**Save
the
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*WMDA/CAR One-Day
Tabletop Trade Show,
Bull Roast & Awards Dinner*

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Tabletop Trade Show Hours 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Light Snacks & Beverages 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
(show floor)

Cocktail Reception 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
(show floor)

Bull Roast & Awards Dinner 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.



Record Attendance at Training Day 2017

by Kevin Rohlwing
WMDA Staff

My involvement in WMDA/CAR Training Day goes back to the days when I was living Louisville, Kentucky and Roy Littlefield asked me to come to Maryland to teach a seminar on tires. He told me that WMDA holds a day of training/education at a local community college and there was some interest in tire-related content. When I arrived for the first time almost 20 years ago, I quickly found out that the event was about a lot more than tires. Over the past few decades, Training Day has always been at the forefront of automotive technology and management and this year was no exception.

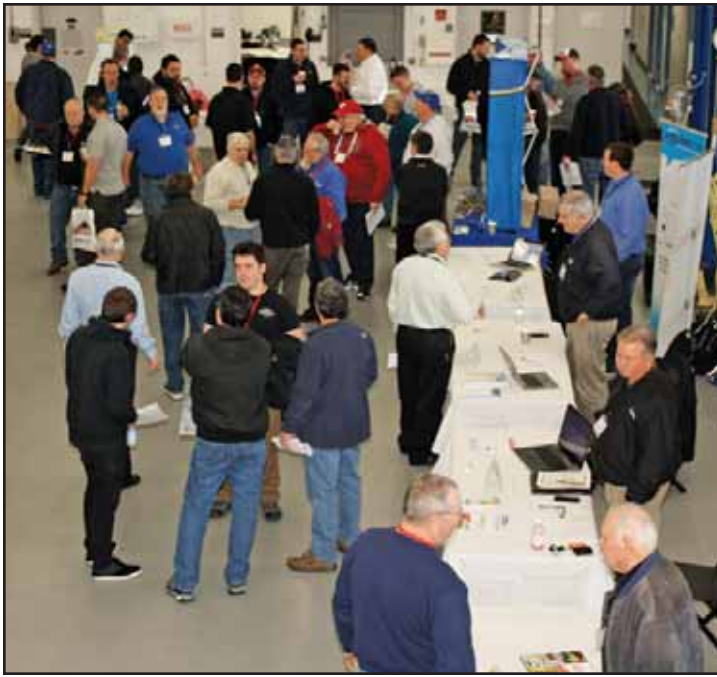


Ron Ipach presented "Next-Gen Car Count Strategies to Keep Your Bays Full" during Training Day.

One of the most notable differences on the program was the addition of Ron Ipach, a professional marketer and speaker on automotive repair management and Dan Marinucci, a recognized national expert on electrical diagnostics. When combined with the other seven sessions on a wide variety of topics, the slate of seminars was very appealing. In fact, it was so appealing that 23 attendees from the Delaware Automotive Service Professionals (DASP) rented a bus and got up early on a cold Saturday morning to travel across the bay for some training and education to help their businesses.

As usual, the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) in Catonsville shined like a showroom paint job. We are incredibly fortunate to have a partner like CCBC that gives WMDA/CAR use of their facility and access to all of the technology at the college. Two of their instructors, Harold Babb and Bill Hemling, assisted with set-up on Friday, taught classes on Saturday and tended to every AV and Internet issue throughout the day. Training Day would not be possible without the support of CCBC-Catonsville





Company sponsored tabletop displays were available for viewing by attendees during Training Day.

and we are lucky to have such a great training partner in our own back yard.

With perfect weather for an indoor training and education event, the recipe for success was in place. We had a strong program, a great facility, and more promotion than ever leading up to Saturday morning. Early registration was a little slow, but in the final weeks, we ended up with more than 130 attendees. Now I've been involved with this event in one way or another for the past 20 years and I've never actually taken a head count, so I don't have any evidence that confirms or denies that it is a record. But I can tell you that I have never seen all the classrooms that full and I've never seen us feed more than 160 people throughout the day.

Even if someone miraculously found some old information that proves Training Day 2017, sponsored by PPC Lubricants/Castrol, was not a record, the people who attended will most certainly attest to the record-setting quality of the event. We made a lot of obvious changes like adding seating for 100+ people so everyone could enjoy the new hot lunch, sponsored by Ben Brown Insurance. Lunch had been an issue at Training Day for as long as I can remember, so we made a point to drastically improve the nourishment throughout the day. From the continental breakfast with coffee, juice,



The morning's continental breakfast provided attendees with a good start to the day.

pastries and fruit to the morning break that featured granola and energy bars, the students were ready for the promise of better food. Featuring Philly cheesesteaks, chicken Philly cheesesteaks, stuffed shells, garlic bread and two different types of salad (with grilled chicken), the new hot lunch was a grand slam homerun. The afternoon break of chips, pretzels and popcorn with some small candy bars finished it off. When all of that was added to the fresh coffee, bottled water, juice and soda throughout the day, the food and drink improvement was obvious.

There is a team of volunteers and staff behind every WMDA/CAR event and for the past 7 years, Ken Quasney with Autosense, has led CAR as chairman and given countless hours to the association and the industry. His passion for the independent repair shop owner is second to none and he played a major role in putting together this year's educational program. In his words, "it's time



The Hot Lunch sponsored by Ben Brown Insurance was a big hit with attendees.



Training Day classes were filled with owners, managers and technicians eager to learn.

to pass the torch to the next generation" so he stepped down as chairman of CAR and turned it over to Karim Morsli with Winkler Automotive. Karim inherits a strong CAR board with a lot of momentum after a record-setting Training Day 2017, and he has been working with his fellow CAR board members to provide benefits and services for independent automotive repair shops for years. Ken's leadership and commitment to the industry created a strong foundation for CAR and it's in good hands with Karim moving forward.

Volunteer leaders like Ken and Karim are what give organizations like WMDA and CAR their strength. Several of the DASP board members were at Training Day and they sent the same message of staying together to support the independent repair shop owner. WMDA, CAR, and DASP give their members a voice in Washington and at the state capitol when legislation is not in the best interests of the industry. The men and women who serve on boards, councils and committees are giving back to the industry, but they are usually the same ones who are constantly looking for ways to improve. I've noticed that business success is a common thread with the WMDA, CAR and DASP board members. I attribute that to the fact that they are constantly networking with other owners, suppliers and manufacturers to see what product or process works best. Events like Training Day are made for those types of owners and managers.

Training Day 2017, sponsored by PPC Lubricants/Castrol, set a new standard by every measure. The hospitality improvements were significant and we are already coming up with ideas on how we can make it even better next year. The program was strong and the CAR board will study the surveys to find out how we can make next year's lineup even stronger. By all accounts, Saturday March 4, 2017 was a great day for the independent automotive repair shops in the mid-Atlantic. An incredible amount of

valuable information is now in the hands of owners, managers and technicians. The ones who do something with it will become better at what they do and improve the image of the industry.

One younger technician I spoke with said he went to school at CCBC-Catonsville and graduated one of the OEM programs. After working flat rate in a dealership for a few years, he left for an independent shop and a steady paycheck. As he put it, he had an 8-month old child and needed to make sure his family was secure. He loves his job and was excited to hear he was coming back to CCBC for some training. This young man is a prime example of what this industry needs and his company wins major points for investing in his education. I was encouraged by the number of younger attendees and even more impressed with them in the classes. Training Day is all about preparing the next generation to carry on the legacy of the independent automotive repair shop. We'll do our part by putting together an even better slate of sessions for next year with improved hospitality. You just need to do your part and make plans to bring your whole crew to Training Day 2018, it's a great investment in your future.

See more Training Day photos on pages 12-13. ♦

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ABOVE & LEFT: Attendees had the opportunity to visit with exhibitors at their tabletop displays during the continental breakfast prior to the beginning of classes and during the hot lunch.

RIGHT: Attendees gather for prize drawings at the conclusion of the day's classes.

CAR provided 5 prizes: 3 \$100 Visa gift cards and 2 tablets, in addition to a 50/50 cash drawing. NAPA Auto Parts and Net Driven also provided door prizes.

BELOW: CAR Chairman Karim Morsli presents prizes to some of the day's lucky winners.





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