

Aloha Everyone,

This is a great time of year, isn't it? The holidays are upon us, and state legislators – at least those in Hawaii—are not in session.

Unfortunately the federal government is still making our lives difficult. There are many examples, from online gaming rules changes to electronic cigarette regulation, and from moves to change the obligated party under the Renewables Fuels Standards to attempts by the big banks and credit card companies to roll back progress on controlling excessive card fees.

One area that particularly gets my goat is the proposed rules from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for the SNAP or Food Stamp program. FNS is about to finalize its rules and doesn't seem to be listening to us or the champions of the beneficiaries of SNAP benefits. The proposed rules would have effectively forced convenience stores out of the program and while we may see some modifications, we hear that FNS will not make wholesale changes to its proposed rules. There are two main problems with the FNS proposals. First, the number of items required to be sold by stores and the depth of stocks of those items would be extremely difficult for c-stores to meet. Second, the rules require that eligible stores cannot sell more than minimal amounts of hot foods or foods that can be heated on-site. Forcing convenience stores out of the program would be a major loss of revenue for our stores and a major loss of convenience for SNAP program participants.

As I reported in the last newsletter, changes are happening in Hawaii. Par Hawaii has nearly completed rebranding Tesoro sites to its new HELE brand, and Chevron is about to close on the sale of its Hawaii business to Island Energy Services, a subsidiary of One Rock Capital Partners. Island Energy will convert its retail stations from Chevron to Texaco.

Now back to the holidays. Thanksgiving in Hawaii has a long history. Ancient Hawaiians celebrated makahiki, a season of feasting, games, celebration, and no warfare and was observed from November through February. Hawaii's first modern Thanksgiving was observed by the missionaries in 1838. To further strengthen relations between the Kingdom of Hawaii and America, King Kamehameha III issued a proclamation in 1849 declaring December 31 as a holiday and day of prayer and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving became a national holiday in Hawaii fourteen years before President Abraham Lincoln declared it a national holiday in America. Today, Hawaii celebrates Thanksgiving along with the rest of the nation and in much the same way – except for our warm weather and maybe some sashimi or spam thrown into the feast!

Mele Kalikimaka a Hauoli Makahiki Hou!

Richard Parry