

**Winter Magazine 2018**

## ***Montana Message***

*The MPMCSA membership is enjoying a beautiful fall in Montana.* We have had the perfect mix of early snow followed by unusually warm days to savor before winter is upon us. The Montana delegation enjoyed our time at the annual PMAA conference in Las Vegas in October. Topics discussed were the upcoming new EPA regulations, the current situation with RFS, interchange/swipe fees, payment security, tobacco issues, and what the new farm bill will look like including menu labeling and SNAP. Each of these issues presents its own challenges in each state, but the value in coming together as a national group is hearing and learning how each state is working to overcome these issues. This is always a great experience, spending time with our colleagues from around the country.

Immediately following the PMAA meeting we were also able to attend the annual NACS Trade Show. Every year I am taken aback at the sheer size of the show. It is always interesting to see all the new products and services available and to stay abreast of what is to come.

We are very pleased to welcome a new board member to the MPMCSA Board of Directors. Steve Haase is a member of Cenex ZipTrip. Steve has been with CHS for 12½ years, with his current role being General Manager of Cenex Zip. Cenex Zip Trip is a brand of CHS, operating 34 convenience store locations in a five-state area. Prior to his role as General Manager, Steve was responsible for the Retail Solutions Department at CHS, and has a total of 28 years of retail experience. Steve has an undergraduate degree in Organizational Behavior and Management plus a Master's in Business Administration. We look forward to incorporating his experience and insight into the forward progress of the MPMCSA.

As many of you know, the 2015 EPA standards/guidelines were adopted this October. I wanted to provide a quick update about a big success that MPMCSA was able to achieve recently in regard to this through our work with the department. DEQ has been working through the changes that have come down from EPA related to this update. PMAA has been collaborating with the EPA and other vested groups to develop alternative methods for testing sumps with interstitial monitoring. Originally DEQ contacted MPMCSA, stating they were not willing to accept the alternative method that allows for sumps to be tested four inches above the lower sensor rather than six inches above the highest penetration point. After a series of meetings, we were able to highlight the benefits of this method, and the DEQ has now agreed to accept this as an option. This is a great example of how the association is able to develop valuable working relationships with the regulatory agencies and help them understand the real world application of the regulations they impose.

This fall tobacco has been in the forefront of the minds of MPMCSA members. The statewide ballot initiative I-185 will go to public vote next month to increase the tobacco tax by \$2 per pack on cigarettes and up to 83% of the wholesale price on all other tobacco products. The association has been intently watching this initiative and has actively sent information out to our members on our stance. Many of our members have worked closely on this initiative, as this will be a significant burden to the C-stores across the state. We also just recently faced a citywide ban on all flavored tobacco products in Helena, the state's capitol. The association did take a strong stance of opposition on this issue because it would have created a profound competitive disadvantage to the affected stores. We had a tremendous showing of members to testify at the city council meeting, which was a key to our success in getting the language changed. We anticipate this will continue to be a hot topic in the upcoming Montana State Legislature in the spring.

The next few months will be busy with preparations for our biannual legislature. The House of Representatives serve two-year terms, so every seat is up for re-election this November, along with a

portion of the Senate. We start to see bill drafts coming in mid-fall with a steadily rapid progression over the next few months. There will be around 2000 bills to monitor during our manic ninety-day session. We are planning a meet and greet in Helena in late January to bring members together with the current legislative body.

The MPMCSA wishes you a happy and safe holiday season. It is such a busy and chaotic time, but we hope you each can rediscover the wonder and joy of the season. Drink the cocoa, gaze at the lights, and snuggle your loved ones, and we will see you in 2019!

Brad Longcake, Executive Director MPMCSA