

Winter Magazine 2021

Oregon Original by OFA President Gabe Zirkle

Season's Greetings from OFA

As we wrap the year up and spend time with loved ones, I'm reminded of my friendly competitors, industry personnel, and front-line workers. To many of us, this year has been another roller-coaster of events that we are trying to navigate the best we can. But I would like to take a moment and thank the people that help make our jobs meaningful.

There is a culture in our Petroleum-based industry that is magnetic. Once oil gets into your system, you tend to stick around for a while. Our industry employs some of the brightest and most gifted individuals and spurs on innovation. We reach every facet of the globe with our products and nearly make the world go round! But sometimes our values are pushed up against, and our most valued assets are forced to make tough decisions – “*do I continue working?*” For so many it's an easy answer – “*what else would I do?*” But that default answer is being challenged by a small group of individuals.

I want to encourage and thank all the people that make my job easier, that open our stations, fry the food that energizes the blue-collar workers, the drivers that safely transport the goods and products that allow mom to take the kids to school, the store personnel that greet with a smile, and those gas attendants that brave the weather to pump our gas. Those salespersons that take a lot of No's to get to the YES. From receptionists turning on the lights to the custodian that shuts it down at night. If you don't know, they are all part of this great group called the Oregon Fuels Association!

What a privilege it has been to serve you over the past 12 months. Honestly, I have learned more about the members and what this association does in one year than the nine years I have served on the Board of Directors. We still have improvements to make, but like the world is experiencing, you can either choose to do nothing, or roll your sleeves up and get moving.

OFA is on the move! We are rolling out member engagement material, new signage to bring that grass roots effort the attention it deserves. Reviewing some of the old legislation that just missed the votes of approval, they are paving the way to what is going to be a jammed-packed short session in the new year. Our lobbyists are rewriting some law language to assist us with the employment crisis at our stations that may bring forth a mini/self-serve environment across the entire state. Polling suggests that we are on the right path by creating CHOICE for the consumer!

We don't win every battle we go up against. It's not from lack of effort, but the reality of the state we do business within. That does not mean the fight was worthless or that we should be silenced, it means we need to increase our efforts. Staff the Government with people that will work for industry inclusion. Change the way we have been doing things and play the game with the intent to win. Cap and Reduce is looking like it will pass and start burdening our pocketbooks soon. But I see it as an opportunity to engage our customers, recruit the next generation of single site operators that don't know or understand there is a voice speaking on their behalf.

If you know people making profits off our industry, you should ask if they know about OFA. It's each of us member's job to give a voice to responsible regulations. The OFA Board cannot go at this alone. We need your help and your participation to effect sustainable change.

Many of you have just wrapped up joining me and others for the Holiday Reception held in Portland. Our Board is moving forward with details to delight and entertain the members at the Annual Conference in Sunriver July 17-19th, 2022 and so much more! With a couple sub committee groups leading the way to ensure your issues are getting the attention of the elected officials that represent each of us.

Folks, it's not easy to be in business. It's not easy to be in charge. But I am thankful that I get to do those things in the PNW. Thankful for the people I rub shoulders with in our industry. Marketers and Associate members alike, we are all responsible to ensure the advocacy of the smallest member's desires are represented.

Thanks for being a part of the Oregon Fuels Association and supporting us throughout the year!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Gabriel Zirkle, OFA President; Board of Directors: Jeff Rouse, Matt Truax, Mark Gram, Ron Tyree, Aaron Reding, Mark Fitz, DJ Builta, Joe Sacomano, Derek Aldrich, Alex Bretthauer, Chris Huiard, Tracey Anderson, Danelle Romain, and Mike Freese