

MONTANA Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association Report

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Greetings from the Big Sky State

We hope the tail end of summer finds everyone well. Montana has enjoyed a lovely summer but with road closures due to snow in August we are feeling it coming to an end. MPMCSA has been busy this summer with interim committees and stakeholder meetings as per usual.

Instead of a recap today, I wanted to share some thoughts as we prepare for the 2025 Montana Legislative Session. It is fair to say that much of our success has come at the hands of our engaged membership. Building and maintaining meaningful relationships between our members and their local legislators is an ongoing process. As the landscape of politics and business grows and evolves we must continue to adapt our practices. I was at a conference recently and listened to a session focused on grassroots advocacy and would like to share some pearls of practice that I took away.

Coalition Building - MPMCSA has historically done a good job of this but will continue to look for new opportunities. A coalition is an alliance or partnership between different organizations that represent a broad range of interests and brings different assets, mission, perspective, constituencies, relationships and strategies to work collaboratively toward a common goal. As executive director, I am often collaborating with other EDs and lobbyists. As you would expect, proposed legislation is never siloed and will affect citizens and businesses in ways the bill sponsor may not have even considered. With each issue we face, we must take a moment to consider unintended consequences and the ripple effect as a means of identifying allies. MPMCSA has a strong network of affiliate members but there is room for growth. Our members have a profound impact in their communities as employers, philanthropists and consumers of goods and services. How can we add affiliate members and grow our network of stakeholders?

Building Capacity - Capacity building is growing the resources needed to bring the group to the next level of operational, financial, and organizational maturity, so it may more effectively and efficiently

advance its mission into the future. So what are the resources of MPMCSA? Our members are certainly our most valuable resource. We must continue to look for innovative ways to engage marketers in the face of consolidation. Our board of directors has traditionally comprised primarily business owners, but moving forward we will be including more employees in leadership positions.

As a leading employer for the state of Montana we have a huge number of employees with a vested interest in the success of our industry. How do we reach and engage them? There is power in numbers and we have the ability to activate thousands of people across the state. When we couple building our internal capacity with coalition building there is a tremendous opportunity for engagement.

Engagement - As we build our capacity and motivate our membership we can then work to build meaningful relationships with local leadership. Again the members of MPMCSA are some of the largest employers in the state of Montana and deeply impact their communities. Legislators honor their responsibility to serve their communities and have a lot of respect for the pillars of their communities. Working to put a face to a name outside of the legislative session goes a long way. Our biennial legislature often feels like drinking from a fire hose. Legislators are inundated with emails, calls, and hallway chats. How can we cut through all of that noise? A pre-existing relationship and a call from home can make all the difference. After the November election we will be creating opportunities to engage members and incoming legislators in their communities to begin the process.

Montana is fortunate to have a tremendous membership, affiliate members and board of directors. We will continue to grow and evolve to best represent and protect our collective interest now and in the future.

Brad Longcake, Executive Director

