

July Legislative Update With MHRA Director, Pat Fontaine

Along with everything else that has occurred thus far in 2020, this year's legislative session will go down in the annals of history as one of the most bizarre. The Governor and our legislative leaders are to be commended for their handling of the pandemic and the many issues that have arisen as a result of it.

Prior to the pandemic, the MHRA was successful in stopping Senate Bill 2092, which would have prevented the ability of an employer to deduct credit card processing fees from server tips that were generated by credit cards. The MHRA provided testimony before the Senate Labor Committee that revealed the damaging effects such legislation would have had on our industry. The bill did not pass out of committee.

The MHRA was also active in preventing The MS Seafood Marketing Law of 2020 (House Bill 551 and Senate Bill 2736) from moving forward. This legislation would have required the disclosure of country of origin, on menus, on all seafood served in your restaurant. It also included many other restrictions on advertising of seafood that would have been unduly burdensome to our members. The MHRA conveyed these concerns to legislative leadership, which was influential to its dying in committee.

The MHRA was pleased to see Senate Bill 2253 (Wine To Go), signed into law. This allows for the sale of an unopened bottle of wine with the purchase of two entrees on a pick-up order. Wine To Go has been beneficial to members during the pandemic, and will continue to provide an avenue for additional sales moving forward.

Our many thanks to Mike Cashion, MHRA Government Affairs Consultant, for his continued direction and guidance. We look forward to his continued involvement in the 2021 session.

On the federal level, the National Restaurant Association's government affairs team is to be commended for their efforts throughout the pandemic. They have worked tirelessly in protecting the interest of our industry and keeping everyone informed throughout the process. I hope you have been reading their communications, and in particular the Blueprint For Restaurant Revival. You can view the Blueprint at www.restaurantsact.com . If you have not already done so, please reach out to your U. S. Representative and Senators to ask for their support.

As you see, government affairs is an integral part of the MHRA's mission, protecting and promoting our industries. Your membership dues investment makes this possible. We sincerely appreciate your support!

At Your Service,
Pat Fontaine
MHRA Executive Director