

Contact: Tom Wenning, Senior Vice President and General Counsel
703-437-5300

N.G.A. PRAISES PRESIDENT BUSH FOR QUICK DECISION TO REPEAL OSHA ERGONOMICS RULES

President Calls Rules Too Broad and Burdensome for Businesses

WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 23, 2001) — The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.), the voice of the independent segment of the retail and wholesale food industry, commended President George W. Bush for quickly signing into law the repeal of the recently-implemented OSHA ergonomic rules. The President signed the legislation on Wednesday, about two weeks after the House of Representatives joined the U.S. Senate and voted to overturn the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's rules, which were developed by the Clinton Administration.

"We are extremely pleased that President Bush saw fit to quickly sign into law the repeal of these rules," said N.G.A. President and CEO Thomas K. Zaucha. "As we have said for a long time, the implementation of these rules could have had a devastating impact on the nation's independent retailers and wholesalers. The President obviously agreed with us and moved swiftly to repeal them."

Zaucha noted that the rules were implemented within the final hours of the Clinton Administration without any consideration of their far-reaching effects on businesses, especially those operated by independent retail and wholesalers.

"Our work is not done, however," Zaucha added. "Now, small business owners and their employees must continue to work together to refine workplace procedures that are sensible for everyone involved. We are extremely confident that voluntary initiatives are preferable to restrictive mandatory regulations. Our members are committed to a safe and healthy workplace. The bottom line is, we are only Ergonomics free as the results of the next election."

At the same time, Tom Wenning, Senior Vice President and General Counsel of N.G.A., praised N.G.A. members for making it known to their representatives that they strongly opposed the OSHA regulations.

"It is obvious that Congress and the President listened to the voice of the people and quickly repealed these unfair rules," said Wenning. "Our members got the word out to their representatives in Washington that these regulations, if implemented, would cause an undue hardship on independent retailers. Washington listened and reacted."

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Independents are the true "entrepreneurs" of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers and their state associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.