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**N.G.A. Praises Creation of Homeland Security Department  
Pledges Support of Independent Retailers and Wholesaler**  
*N.G.A. Attends White House Bill Signing Establishing New Agency*

**ARLINGTON, Virginia (November 25, 2002)** – The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) today praised the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which had been strongly supported by N.G.A. The new cabinet-level agency was established when President Bush signed into law legislation creating the agency at a White House ceremony today.

“N.G.A. is very pleased that this new agency was created with strong bipartisan support. Members of Congress recognized that forming the Department of Homeland Security was a top priority and worked swiftly to reach a compromise following the elections,” said N.G.A. Senior Vice President and General Counsel Thomas F. Wenning, who attended the East Room signing ceremony on behalf of N.G.A.

“President Bush made a clear and convincing case that he should have the same authority that every President since John F. Kennedy has had to suspend collective bargaining agreements because of national security, and Congress recognized that,” Wenning added.

“N.G.A. looks forward to working closely with the new department to coordinate security issues on behalf of independent retailers and wholesalers,” he said.

Before President Bush signed the bill, he announced he will nominate former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge to be the first secretary of Homeland Security. The new department will analyze threats, guard borders, coordinate national responses and focus the “full resources of the American government on the safety of its people,” Bush said. The law signed by President Bush consolidates 22 federal agencies into one new department, in the largest reorganization of the U.S. government since the 1947 act that established the Defense Department.

“This new department will analyze intelligence information on terror threats collected by the CIA, the FBI, the National Security Agency and others. The department will match this intelligence against the nation's vulnerabilities -- and work with other agencies, and the private sector, and state and local governments to harden America's defenses against terror,” President Bush said.

The new department also will end a great deal of duplication and overlapping responsibilities among federal agencies, he said. “Our objective is to spend less on administrators in offices and more on working agents in the field -- less on overhead and more on protecting our neighborhoods and borders and waters and skies from terrorists,” President Bush said.

“N.G.A.’s retail and wholesale members share President Bush’s goal of building a stronger, more flexible federal agency to combat terrorism and to unite efforts to promote the safety of the American people,” Wenning added. “As President Bush said, we are facing a new kind of war, with determined enemies. We are very pleased that this essential reform was carefully considered by Congress and enacted with strong bipartisan majorities. We are also pleased that Congress passed terrorism insurance legislation, supported by N.G.A., to protect our economy.”

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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 and others are employee owned. 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.