

Contact: Tom Wenning

National Grocers Association

**Senior Vice President and General
Counsel**

(703) 516-0700

N.G.A. COMMENDS WASHINGTON STATE ACTION TO SCALE BACK STATE'S WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS RULE

WASHINGTON — (February 21, 2003) The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) today praised Washington State lawmakers' votes to scale back the state's sweeping workplace ergonomics rule, which had been recognized as one of the nation's most stringent ergonomics rules.

Business groups in Washington State hailed the Senate vote as a victory for employers and predicted that if the measure were vetoed by Gov. Gary Locke the veto would be overridden. N.G.A. Senior Vice President and General Counsel Thomas F. Wenning hailed the vote as a significant victory for the state's independent, community-focused retail grocers and wholesalers, as well as for the industry nationwide.

"This is a significant victory for the entire grocery industry, especially independent businesses in Washington State. The Washington Food Industry is to be commended for the leadership role it played in this effort," Wenning said. "Businesses nationwide have been watching the situation in Washington closely, and we are very pleased to see that the state Senate has acted to give businesses a much-needed measure of relief from this sweeping set of regulations.

"On the national level, N.G.A. believes that voluntary, industry-specific ergonomics guidelines, developed with close cooperation between regulators and the private sector, are a far better approach to addressing potential causes of musculoskeletal disorders. We remain committed to working alongside the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to develop workable solutions to safety concerns, based on sound science," Wenning added.

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.