



News Release

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Governor Rendell Signs PFMA/PCSC Supported Organized Retail Crime Bill Into Law

CAMP HILL, PA — Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell signed the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association (PFMA) and Pennsylvania Convenience Store Council (PCSC) supported “Organized Retail Crime” (ORC) legislation into law today. Representative Thomas R. Caltagirone (D-Berks) was the primary sponsor of the bill and Representative Ron Marsico (R-Dauphin) was the first co-sponsor. House Bill 1720 strengthens Pennsylvania’s retail theft laws. It takes effect in 60 days.

Specifically, the new law defines Organized Retail Theft (ORT) and sets that type of theft at the felony level which will help align Pennsylvania with neighboring states to make our state’s retailers less of a target for ORC.

Organized groups of professional thieves steal more than \$30 billion in merchandise from national retailers annually with little fear of serious punishment. According to the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), Pennsylvania loses an estimated \$81 million in tax revenue annually as a result.

ORC is different from common shoplifting. This bill is specifically aimed at professional thieves who make a living out of organized retail crime.

ORC gangs have been linked to international terrorism and payments to “boosters” often enable drug addicted thieves to continue their addiction.

The bill establishes ORT as a felony of the third degree if the retail value of the stolen merchandise is at least \$5,000, but not more than \$19,999. If the retail value of the stolen merchandise is at least \$20,000, the offense is considered a felony of the second degree.

“Wegmans appreciates the efforts of Representative Caltagirone and Representative Marsico to strengthen the retail theft laws to include Organized Retail Theft as a specific offense,” said Adam Nowicki, current PFMA/PCSC Loss Prevention Committee Chair and Wegmans Food Markets Pennsylvania division trainer.

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2-2-ORC Law

Nancy Jones, previous chair of PFMA's Loss Prevention Committee and vice president of asset protection at Giant Food Stores says, "This new law will give district attorneys and law enforcement officers better tools to prosecute the perpetrators of organized retail crime. We really needed this change in Pennsylvania."

In July 2010, the PFMA/PCSC Loss Prevention Committee will work to educate law enforcement on the passage of this bill into law. On July 14, committee representatives will provide concurrent presentations at the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association Summer Meeting in Erie as well as the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police 97th Annual Education and Training Conference in Lancaster. PFMA also has plans to work with trainers at the Municipal Police Officers' Education & Training Commission (MPOETC) to inform them about the new law.

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The Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association/Pennsylvania Convenience Store Council is a statewide trade association representing more than 1,100 retail food companies, wholesale distributors and other associated business members throughout Pennsylvania. The association works to improve the public image, effectiveness and profitability of its members who operate more than 6,000 retail food stores.