

# NOZZLE & WRENCH

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON DC, MARYLAND & DELAWARE SERVICE STATION & AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR ASSOCIATION



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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- >> What We Do and Do Not Know About the Inflation Reduction Act
- >> SEO & SEM Best Practices Your Team Can Master
- >> Customer Service Contest Award Nominees 2022

*...MDA is bending over backwards to help locations comply with new regulations.*

## KIRK'S CORNER

# Periodic Operation & Maintenance Inspections



By Kirk Mccauley,  
Director Of Member  
Relations &  
Government Affairs

The following is from Maryland Department of Environment Oil Control Program after WMDA inquired about regulations, forms, and training update.

“MDE has required all operator training companies to submit their training programs to MDE for approval to include new regulation requirements. The training programs are currently under review/approval. We are also preparing the updated UST Compliance Outline that will be sent to all UST owners to provide to the certified A, B and C operators to become familiar with the compliance requirements.

At this time, we are not

requiring recertification of the A, B and C operators, however they must have knowledge of the new COMAR requirements as it pertains to their USTs and facility. The Walkthrough Inspection fact sheet and monthly and annual walkthrough inspection forms are available on the MDE website at: [Fact Sheets and Publications \(maryland.gov\)](#). The walkthrough inspections begin Sept 11, 2022. There are a few large multi-facility owners that have requested to use their own walkthrough forms. We are trying to work with these owners on accepting their forms provided they can certify their forms are at least as stringent as the MD forms.

As soon as the Compliance Outline is completed, we will send information to UST owners.

Also, the new Third Party Inspection report and handbook is being finalized. As soon as it is approved, information will be sent to all MD certified inspectors. During the



*Continues on page 4*

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**KIRK'S KORNER**

Periodic Operation & Maintenance Inspections . . . . . Cover

**NEWS FROM WASHINGTON**

Legislative Update: Government Affairs Update . . . . . 12

Editorial: What We Do and Do Not Know About the Inflation Reduction Act . . . . . 14

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

SEO & SEM Best Practices Your Team Can Master . . . . . 5

Customer Service Contest Award Nominees 2022 . . . . . 8

WMDA/CAR Family Day Photos . . . . . 10

WMDA/CAR Endorsed Membership Benefits & Service Providers . . . . . 18

**ADVERTISERS' INDEX**

Carroll Motor Fuels . . . . . 15

CMR Insurance Agency LLC/Erie Insurance . . . . . 4

Parts Authority . . . . . Inside front cover

Petroleum Marketing Group . . . . . 7

Spigler Petroleum Equipment, LLC . . . . . 16

The Wills Group . . . . . Inside back cover

WMDA PAC . . . . . Back cover

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*The retail sales tax saving of \$9,000 was good for all our members, repair and gas/c-stores.*

*Continued from page 1*

**current inspector orientations, we are providing information for the new requirements.”**

The bottom line is MDA is bending over backwards to help locations comply with new regulations. Fact sheets and publications is a must read. The link above will take you there and at bottom of page on UST’s are 3 new links. First link is what you need to know about Walkthrough inspections. Only 2 pages, even if you have a company do your inspection you need to know what is required. Next 2 links are monthly and annual inspection forms.

### **Maryland Saving plan for business**

In 2016, the Maryland Legislature enacted [House Bill 1378](#), which authorized the [Maryland Small Business Retirement Savings Program](#), the authority responsible for creating MarylandSaves.

MarylandSaves is a state-sponsored program designed to make it easy for businesses to offer their employees a retirement and emergency savings plan. Established Maryland businesses (in business 2 years) that use an automatic payroll system will be required either to offer their employees a retirement plan or to enroll their employees in the MarylandSaves program. Businesses that do so will receive \$300 per year via a waiver of the annual Maryland business filing fee.

While there is no cost to business and no reporting requirements, your payroll service is going to charge a fee to handle. This is a voluntary program for the employee, and they do not have to open a saving plan. If you

offer the plan, you save \$300 a year for a business license.

Maryland is in a pilot program stage and the full program is due to start in Mid-September. Links to bill and link to information is above.

### **Customer Service Contest and Membership**

I started doing CSC inspection last week of July and as of August 11, I have done 39. Suppliers nominate most of the locations for service stations and convenience stores and WMDA/CAR nominates repair facilities. You can also self-nominate your facilities before inspections start. We inspect locations and some might not be members, some will be expired members.

Normally I do not try to sell membership when I am doing inspections. Just does not seem right. I was at a station and the dealer said how can I get rack prices? I said I thought you were a member, and you should be getting them 5 days a week less holidays. He said he was, but he did not see the value in membership.

Normally during inspections, I am in and out or I would never get done. I just found the exception, looked at the dealer and said you want rack, and you don’t see

value (we spend close to \$10,000 a year to buy rack). I looked at his lottery terminal and you don’t see value in legislation that will increase agent fees by average \$3100 per location, you don’t see value in not paying retail sales tax for 3 months up to \$9,000. The retail sales tax saving of \$9,000 was good for all our members repair and gas/c-stores. We were continually active in passing the lottery bill and constantly advocating for more benefits like retail sales tax holiday.

When the gas tax holiday was passed by both chambers on a Friday and we got a look at it on Saturday – it was a disaster, no provision to repay a dealer for gas in ground! This would have hung dealers with fuel in the ground out to dry. Working with Ellen Valentino from MAPDA we started contacting Senate and house leaders and Maryland comptroller’s personnel. By Monday we had a reverse gas tax amendment to the bill and the comptroller was working on forms to make it happen.

**Every location you have benefits from WMDA/CAR having your back and \$299 for your primary location and \$150 for other locations is a fair price. Every location you have benefits. ■**



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# SEO & SEM Best Practices Your Team Can Master

Brought to you by [Netdriven](#)

**The last couple of years have transformed** the buying journey and changed the way auto businesses need to connect with their shoppers. Although daily life (and shopping) has since settled into a fairly normal routine, people's shopping habits have been permanently altered to prioritize online search.

For instance, we've seen a massive migration to searching the internet for basically every need, whether someone intends to buy the product in a store or not – and auto services and tires are no exception. Auto businesses that want to remain relevant to their customers' shopping habits will need to maintain a strong digital presence. This can be achieved through Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM).

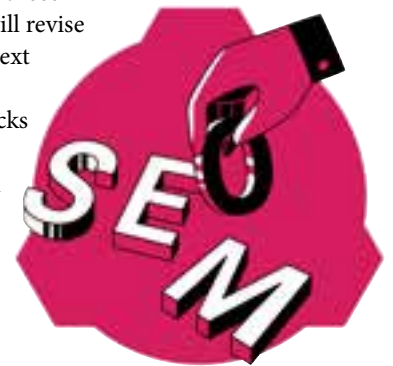
## What is SEO?

SEO is a digital strategy to increase your website's search engine results page (SERP) rank through organic means, such as keywords. It is by and far the most effective method to increase your brand visibility and drive more traffic to your site. With the majority of consumers turning to search engines to find their next purchase, your brand *needs* to be easily found.

Why does your website need a boost to be visible to shoppers? There are more than 1,970,000,000 – and counting – websites on the internet today, as reported by InternetLiveStats. People rely on search engines to filter through this mammoth number and find the websites that fulfill their exact needs. Typically, if those websites aren't listed on the first page of SERPs, a consumer will revise their search terms and start fresh rather than clicking to the next page of results. To make matters more complicated, Search Engine Journal found that **more than a quarter** of website clicks go to the very first organic search result alone<sup>2</sup>. That's why brands need an effective SEO strategy to rank prominently on the first page!

## Leveraging SEO

When a shopper searches for the exact services and parts that you offer and finds your website on the first results page, they become an ideal lead because they're likely to visit your site and convert into a customer. To help your website get in front of these shoppers, it's crucial to build a strong SEO strategy using tools such as:



*Why does your website need a boost to be visible to shoppers? There are more than 1,970,000,000 – and counting – websites on the internet today...*

# SEO vs. SEM



## Targeted, High-Value Keywords

Keywords are, well, key to your SEO because they enrich your content and make your site more compatible with relevant search results. A keyword is a term or idea that people type into search engines to answer their burning questions. Keywords fall into three different categories:

**Generic:** These are the general terms that encapsulate the theme or basic intent of the search. Think “engine repair” or “flat tire fix.” Because these terms are so basic, they generate a lot of search volume, but also a lot of competition with other auto shops.

**Broad:** These narrow down the search results somewhat by adding specifics such as “truck tires” or “older car transmission repair” without losing search volume.

**Long-Tail:** These can be terms or even full sentences users search for when they know exactly what they want. While long-tail keywords tend to have a lower search volume, they’re more likely to bring you qualified leads who are farther along the sales funnel. Examples include “Michelin all season tires” or “Toyota Camry brake pads.”

## Prominent Keyword Placement

You may already know that a keyword should be used a few times on your page, but did you know that its placement also matters? Search engines place more value on keywords that are listed at least once at the top of the page as well as within the copy.

## Title Tags

Once you’ve identified the right keywords, you can use them to boost the efficacy of your title tags. The title tag exists in the head section of each webpage and is one of the most important factors because it helps search engines understand the page’s contents.

Every page should have unique title tags, as these are the keyword phrases that will be highlighted in SERPs when those terms are searched. This is where individual content pages will greatly boost your website’s visibility because you can focus your title tags on a single topic. Keep tags to 70 characters or less to avoid them being truncated by search engines.

## Up-to-Date Inventory Listings

With supply chains still uncertain and shoppers relying on online

search to discover and research new purchases, it’s important to make sure all your current inventory is featured online and your listings reflect your in-store offerings. Boost the visibility of each listing by creating a header, product description and tags featuring relevant keywords.

## What is SEM?

While SEO is the cornerstone of a good marketing strategy, SEM turbocharges your online presence by featuring prominent paid ads. SEM dramatically boosts your site’s conversion rate because the paid ads direct leads straight to specific service pages and inventory listings, where they can begin the shopping process in earnest.

In addition to making your brand more prominent in SERPs, SEM brings your message to multiple platforms to create a well-rounded marketing campaign and reach shoppers wherever they’re looking. Here are the prominent SEM ad types:

## Pay-Per-Click Ads

Pay-per-click (PPC) are the paid ads featured in search results and are one of the most popular SEM tools. PPC gives businesses

of all sizes the opportunity to reach a greater number of qualified leads with a targeted message, such as store promotions and new inventory arrivals. You can tailor your PPC ads to your budget by presetting your ad spend, and you only pay when a user clicks to your site.

### **Geo Targeting**

As a local business (even if you run multiple stores), your brand can benefit from geo targeting. This SEM strategy targets a specified location to advertise to local searchers, especially those performing “near me” searches. You can also draw a digital circumference around a certain area if you want to reach consumers who are attending an auto show or shopping at a competing store.

### **Dynamic Remarketing Ads**

Most shoppers won't convert to a sale the first time they visit your website, especially if they're still in the research phase. You can re-engage bounced leads by continuing to reach them on other areas of the internet as they continue their search. Show them ads based on their past inventory searches to direct them back to your website. Since leads undergo a lot of comparison shopping in the early stages of their search, remarketing ads will keep your brand top of mind until they're ready to make a decision. You can include incentives such as special deals and encourage them to connect with your team to keep them in the sales funnel.

SEO (or unpaid search) is the foundation of maintaining an effective online presence, but it is a long-term strategy that grows richer over time, and you won't see results right away. SEM (or paid search) makes your brand visible *now* so that you can connect with qualified leads and stay in front of them. ■

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# Customer Service Contest Award Nominees 2022

## Service Station/C-Store Nominees

### NOMINEE

John Conner  
 Sukhpal Bandesha (Bobby)  
 Fazal Sirhandi  
 Johny Joseph  
 Sultan Mahmood  
 Jae Park  
 Sam Khoury  
 Hadi Zakatia  
 Ron Ciuffetelli  
 Shabeen Aulakh  
 Riaz Ahmad/NSR  
 Majid Hussain  
 Mario Bruno  
 Kristie & TC Sohn-chong  
 Mansoor Anvari  
 Ajit Singh (Lucky)  
 Mian Basil  
 Joe and Mellisa Parsley  
 Alex Diaz/Aldo Carbonaro  
 Chuck Parcelles  
 Metin Omer  
 Paul Choi  
 Bidur Ghimire  
 Yong Hwang  
 Raji Shahzad & Son RJ  
 Manjit Singh/Davinaur Kaur  
 NSR  
 Zain & Rubina Nazir  
 BJ Singh  
 Mike Duncan  
 Elias Jabra  
 Fazal Sirhandi  
 Mel Sherbert  
 Kenneth Wilhelm  
 Nasir Cheema  
 Shoukat Choudhry  
 Mike Mitchell  
 Brian Hannam  
 Daljeet Singh

### LOCATION

Connecticut Ave BP  
 Claymont Sunoco Aplus  
 Maryland House Sunoco  
 Pikesville CMF  
 Orlean Street Sunoco  
 Canton CMF  
 Beltsville Shell  
 Hilltop Exxon  
 Bowie Shell  
 Harbor Way Exxon  
 Route 40 Sunoco  
 Beltway Crown  
 Lake Liberty  
 Urbana Pike CMF  
 Columbia Liberty  
 Xtramart  
 Elkridge Shell  
 Frederick Shell Car Wash  
 Darnestown Liberty  
 Flower Hill Liberty  
 Waugh Chapel Mart  
 Germantown Liberty  
 Germantown Sunoco Aplus  
 Old Greenbelt CMF  
 Jiffy Mart Hampstead  
 Dorsey Shell  
 Birdies Shell Hughsville  
 Joppa CMF  
 Landoverhills Tiger Mart  
 Savage Exxon  
 Watkins Mill Liberty  
 Chesapeake House Sunoco  
 Piny Orchard BP  
 Olney Sunoco Aplus  
 Urban Mart Mobil  
 St Barnabas Shell  
 Mitch&Bills Exxon  
 Potomac BP  
 Randallstown CMF



Mansoor Anvari  
 Shabeen Aulakh  
 Robert Mcleod  
 Benny Yavitz  
 Malik Imran  
 Carl Hobson  
 Manzar Ahmad  
 Ather Chaudhry  
 Sam Hudhud  
 Fazal Sirhandi  
 Naveed Wahla/Usman Zia

Rockville Liberty  
 Clifton Park Exxon  
 Briggs Chaney Exxon  
 Aspen Hill Exxon  
 Glenmont Sunoco  
 Hob's CMF  
 Silver Hill Exxon  
 BP Travel Center  
 Walkerville Liberty  
 National Harbor Sunoco  
 Lothian Shell (Gibsons)

## Repair Shop Nominees

### NOMINEE

Greg Buckley  
 Rick Levitan/Doug Grills  
 Rick Levitan/Doug Grills  
 Rick Levitan/Doug Grills  
 Scott Steinbach  
 Rick Levitan/Doug Grills  
 Mike Warshauer  
 Robert Choisser  
 Dave Taggart  
 Billy & Doug Hillmuth  
 Sandi Weaver  
 Bruce Spencer  
 Lewis Schnauble

### LOCATION

Buckley's Auto Care  
 Auto-Stream Car Care Annapolis  
 Auto-Stream Car Care Baltimore  
 Auto-Stream CarCare Hampton  
 Caton Auto Clinic  
 Auto-Stream Car Care ClarksBurg  
 Rising Sun Motors  
 Choisser Import Auto Parts  
 Superior Auto Service  
 Hillmuth Cert. Auto of Glenwood  
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# Government Affairs Update



By Roy Littlefield IV

**It has been an active summer** in the government affairs department WMDA/CAR being represented by SSDA-AT on the federal level.

In the past month, SSDA-AT attended a fundraiser for House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (MD-5-D). We continue to have a close relationship with the Congressman. Hoyer has spoken at every past federal lobby day and been a strong supporter of our industry. I had the opportunity to speak with Hoyer at the event.

SSDA-AT recently held a meeting with Rep. Jamie Raskin (MD-8-D) to discuss a variety of pending issues in Congress. SSDA-AT continues to hold a strong relationship with Raskin in the Maryland delegation. Raskin has understood WMDA's concerns with certain spending provisions, and we once again shared our positions and concerns with some legislation being considered. The Congressman was very receptive to us at the meeting.

SSDA-AT continues to take part in collation meetings and in the past month we have participated in a Small Business Legislative Council Meeting (SBLC) and American Highway Users Meeting. Topics at these meetings included prospects of a Build Back Better bill, implementation of the infrastructure bill, and an outlook at the elections. At the SBLC meeting, SSDA-AT heard a federal update from Greg Warren, Legislative Assistant to Congressman Darin LaHood (IL).

In the past month, I presented at a REPAIR Act (H.R. 6570) briefing. Passing Right to Repair legislation on the federal level remains a top priority for us. Staff from over 25 Congressional offices attended the briefing in the Cannon House office building. The REPAIR Act would preserve consumer access to high quality and affordable vehicle repair by ensuring that as vehicles continue to modernize, vehicle owners and their repairer of choice have equal access to repair and maintenance tools and data. SSDA-AT continues to work on co-sponsors for the legislation and educate members of Congress on the issue. We have added 12 co-sponsors to the bill, 6 Republicans and 6 Democrats, keeping the legislation bi-partisan.

## President Nominates Shailen Bhatt to Serve as Federal Highway Administrator

On July 21, 2022, President Biden announced his intention to nominate Shailen Bhatt to serve as Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Bhatt has a long career of senior leadership in transportation policy, including as CEO of two different state DOTs (including of Delaware, the home state of the President and of EPW



*The REPAIR Act would preserve consumer access to high quality and affordable vehicle repair by ensuring that as vehicles continue to modernize, vehicle owners and their repairer have equal access to repair and maintenance tools and data.*

# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Chairman Tom Carper). He has also served as CEO of ITS America and as a Senior VP of AECOM. He earlier served at FHWA and at the DOT in Kentucky.

Below is background on Mr. Bhatt included in the President's July 21 announcement:

Shailen Bhatt is Senior Vice President of Global Transportation Innovation and Alternative Delivery at AECOM, a multinational infrastructure consulting firm. Bhatt previously served as the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, Cabinet Secretary of the Delaware Department of Transportation, and as a presidential appointee at the U.S. Department of Transportation. In these roles, Bhatt spearheaded innovative solutions, collaborations, and partnerships to support the delivery of safe, sustainable, and cost-effective transportation systems for the 21st century. He previously worked as the CEO of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, Chair of the Board of Directors for the National Operations Center of Excellence (NOCOe), Chair of the Executive Committee of the I-95 Corridor Coalition, and was a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Automotive and Personal Transport. Bhatt chairs an external advisory board for the United States Department of Energy, is a member of the Aurora Safety Advisory Board for autonomous driving, and is the Chair of the ITS World Congress Board of Directors.

## House Passes Transportation Appropriations Bill for FY 2023

On July 20, the House of Representatives passed FY 2023 appropriations legislation that combined into one bill 6 of the 12 annual appropriations bills, including the transportation-housing bill. The vote on the overall package was a straight party-line vote of 220-207.

The two parties are in disagreement on the overall level of appropriations and on the division of that total between defense and non-defense accounts. Due to that disagreement, passage of FY 2023 appropriations by Congress is not expected until after the November elections and possibly not until next year.

As to transportation appropriations specifically, the House-passed bill fully supports funding of all authorized funds from the Highway Trust Fund for FY 2023 and for highway and bridge investments for FY 2023 included in the new infrastructure law.

The House-passed FY 2023 appropriations bill also includes some funding (mainly for project earmarks) for highways above-authorized levels. Earlier this year, in presenting its budget, the Administration supported some funding above authorized levels for transportation, but none of that was for highways.

SSDA-AT wrote to both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees urging that funding for transportation above authorized levels should include funding for highway investments.

SSDA-AT will continue

to advocate for full funding of the highway funds in the new infrastructure law and for appropriated funds for highways above-authorized levels.

## Ocean Shipping Reform Act

WMDA/CAR members have increasingly expressed concern over supply chain problems.

Accordingly, we note that on June 16 the President signed into law the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022.

The new legislation empowers the Federal Maritime Commission to take various steps, including actions to address issues that contributed to port congestion.

Of course, SSDA-AT will continue to champion efficient, uncongested and safe highways as components of efficient supply chains and a competitive U.S. economy.

## DOL Targets Proposed Rule on OT Exemptions for October

The Federal Government recently released the biannual regulatory agenda, in which DOL targets October 2022 for release of a proposed rule on overtime pay exemptions.

WMDA/CAR is disappointed that DOL plans to move forward with the proposed rule despite the current economic conditions.

SSDA-AT will be exploring avenues for advocacy, including legislation or appropriations riders that delay the rule.

Please keep us posted on your own efforts and conversations you have with lawmakers about this issue. ■

# What We Do and Do Not Know About the Inflation Reduction Act



By Roy Littlefield III

**Despite the odds, there now appears** to be a very real possibility that the Senate will take up and pass a comprehensive tax and climate bill in the coming week.

It appeared that Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) had walked from negotiations over a broad reconciliation package in favor of a more narrow bill addressing prescription drug pricing and the extension of expanded Obamacare subsidies. Senator Manchin also announced that he, like multiple other Senators, had tested positive for COVID 19, raising further questions about what, if anything, the Senate might be able to get done before its August recess.

Then Senator Manchin and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) made a surprise announcement that they had reached an agreement on a broad bill that has the very timely title - the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

## Here's what we know:

- **The legislation is estimated to raise \$739 billion, expend \$433 billion and reduce the deficit by around \$300 billion.**
- **The largest pay-for is a new 15% minimum corporate tax (commonly known as a book tax) which alone is estimated to raise \$313 billion.** This tax will only hit those mega C Corporations with profits exceeding a billion dollars. [Technically, the 15% tax will be on "book income" which is the profit that is reported on financial statements for shareholders, subject to certain adjustments.] While the poster child for this tax is Amazon, there are apparently another 199 mega corporations who could be subject to the tax. Additional funds will be raised through new provisions allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, increasing IRS tax enforcement and changing the carried interest rules, particularly for investment professionals with an adjusted gross income in excess of \$400,000. Even though the charge has been made that this bill could increase taxes for individuals who make less than \$400,000, it is not clear what provisions are being referred to in making this claim.
- **\$369 billion of expenditures in the bill will go towards clean energy and climate provisions.** These include a range of energy targeted tax credits among them electric car credits, renewable energy credits and consumer energy credits. In announcing the bill, Senators Schumer and Manchin emphasized that the provisions would be estimated to cut greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 40% by 2030. Key



*The largest pay-for is a new 15% minimum corporate tax (commonly known as a book tax) which alone is estimated to raise \$313 billion.*




to getting Senator Manchin (hailing from a coal state) on board with these provisions, the bill also includes carbon capture credits and provisions on federal oil and gas leases (opposed by the environmental community).



- **The bill will also extend expanded Affordable Care Act (ACA or Obamacare) premium subsidies through the end of 2025.** This, along with the drug pricing provision, was part of the narrower bill that we were all expecting to pass.
- **The bill does not address the state and local tax (SALT) deduction but that is not likely to prevent its passage.** In the House numerous members from high tax states have previously insisted that any reconciliation bill must address the current cap on the SALT deduction (put in place by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act). However, when presented with the Inflation Reduction Act this week, these members seemed generally willing to support the bill. The fact that the bill doesn't touch personal taxes in any way seems to make the package palatable (and will presumably help with messaging at home). As we get closer to January 1,



2026, the need to get SALT relief becomes less important since the entire provision expires on December 31, 2025. The SALT deduction is 100% restored as of January 1, 2026 to how it stood before the Trump tax cuts.



- **The Republicans will try to use the vote-a-rama to force hard votes for at-risk Democrats.** While the time for debate on reconciliation bills in the Senate is limited (which is what prevents a filibuster and allows the bill



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*The Republicans will do what they can in vote-a-rama to put forth amendments that will split the party or create tough decisions for vulnerable Democrats looking ahead to reelection this fall.*

to pass on a majority vote), a reconciliation bill cannot be passed until all amendments have been considered. Thus, consideration of a reconciliation bill typically triggers a “vote-a-rama” process during which any Senator can introduce an amendment to the bill as long as it is deemed to be germane by the Senate Parliamentarian. Not only do Republicans oppose the reconciliation bill on its merits, but the timing of the new bill – announced just shortly after the Senate passed the \$280 billion China completion package which Minority Leader McConnell had previously been using as a bargaining chip to prevent a larger reconciliation bill – has certainly added flame to the fire. The Republicans will do what they can in vote-a-rama to put forth amendments that will split the party or create tough decisions for vulnerable Democrats looking ahead to reelection this fall.

**Here’s what we don’t know:**

- **Whether Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) will support the bill.** As you’ll recall, Senator Sinema was the other vocal holdout who stood in the way of the Senate taking up the House-passed Build Back Better bill. Senator Sinema has made it clear that she’s not thrilled at having been left out of the secret negotiations (when asked, Senator Manchin said this was because he didn’t think they would come to fruition) and has been non-committal about whether she will support the bill or demand changes. Any changes could prove the breaking point to the fragile peace that Senators Schumer and Manchin have negotiated. Don’t be surprised if the carried interest tax

provision is dropped to keep Senator Sinema in the deal (some of us wouldn’t be surprised to learn that it was included for just this reason). This provision is a very minor revenue raiser when compared to the other two revenue raisers. What we do know now is that we can breathe a sigh of relief that there will be no increase in the capital gains tax rate, no reduction to the 199 deduction for pass-throughs,

no elimination of the stepped-up in basis for assets going through an estate, no change to the 3.8% net investment income tax (NIT) and no change to 1031 like-kind exchanges. This represents a huge win for WMDA/CAR and all of our members.

- **Whether all the provisions will be deemed reconciliation eligible.** Last Wednesday, Senator Schumer turned the 700+ page draft of the bill over

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to the Senate Parliamentarian for review. Because the Democrats are trying to pass the bill through reconciliation all provisions must be related to spending, revenue or the debt limit and cannot increase the deficit outside the 10 year budget window. The role of the Senate Parliamentarian and her team will be to review each provision of the legislation to determine if any fail to meet this criteria. The proponents of the bill can work with the parliamentarian to tweak provision to make them pass muster or to try to convince the parliamentarian that the provisions qualify. Technically, the Senate Parliamentarians decision can be overruled by a majority in the Senate but this can be politically dicey.

- **The timing for taking up the bill.** Senator Schumer told his caucus Thursday that they should be prepared to work through next weekend and that the start of recess may be delayed a few days. Senator Schumer clearly wants to move the bill as quickly as possible but there are a few complicating factors. First is the review by the Senate

- Parliamentarian discussed above. The Parliamentarian was already reviewing the smaller drug pricing and ACA subsidies package that has now been rolled into this bill and Senators Schumer and Manchin are clearly hoping that the Parliamentarian's review of the larger bill will be expedited with Senator Manchin most recently saying that they are hoping to have the decisions back by next weekend. Additionally, COVID could throw a wrench in things because the Democrats will need every single member of their caucus (plus the two Independents who caucus with them) to vote for the bill and the Senate does not allow for proxy voting. Just this past Thursday, Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) announced he had COVID. The Democrats will need to hold their breaths (and wear their masks) in hopes of being able to have all members available for a vote.
- **What will happen in the House.** It is likely that the House will go out on recess next week as scheduled and then reconvene in the event that the Senate passes the

Inflation Reduction Act. Unlike the Senate, the House rules do allow for proxy voting which makes things a bit easier when it comes to rounding up votes. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has generally proven very adept at wrangling the various factions of the Democratic party together and most Democrats see this package as key for helping the party's prospects in the mid-term. That said, assuming the vote will occur after August 9 (when a Republican is projected to win a special election for the vacant seat in Minnesota's 1st district), the Democrats will only hold an eight vote margin, meaning Speaker Pelosi can only afford three no votes or abstentions from her caucus. On the more expansive Build Back Better Act (when the Democrats had one more voting member than they do now) there was only one Democrat (Rep. Golden from Maine) who voted no and no Democrats abstained. SSDA-AT will continue to monitor and provide updates on where things are going with the legislation. ■



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*Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller, along with delegates and senators are up for election in Maryland.*

- ▶ **Ban on menthol cigarettes** in District of Columbia means there will be copycat bills in Maryland and Delaware this year.
- ▶ California **bans gas powered cars** by 2035, will MD, DE, or DC be next?
- ▶ Baltimore council members want to **ban new service stations** in the city, ban plastics, Styrofoam & sugary drinks. They have shut down many retailers with pad locks on doors, blaming business for crime. Police are telling our retailers you are on your own, hire security guards. They need to focus on crime, not plastic bags. The absurdity of actions like this underscores the need for new legislators.
- ▶ Labor and employee bills in all three jurisdictions would add thousands of dollars in **payroll cost** per year. While we have been successful in stopping or amending most bills, they will all be back this year.
- ▶ **Right to Repair** – New cars manufactured are installing devices in vehicles that send information over wireless networks to dealerships automatically.

As absurd as some of these bills are, they are real and affect all our members. These issues will be or already are in the legislative process. We need legislators who support retail business, do not be on the side lines.

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