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NEWS RELEASE – For immediate Use

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Who speaks for your business's legislative needs?

New organization helps Virginia retailers

Here's good news for Virginia retailers: The Retail Merchants Association (RMA) and the Retail Alliance (RA) have created a new legislative arm. The Virginia Retail Federation LLC (VRF) will serve independent, franchise, regional and national retailers throughout Virginia.

Historically, the RMA has served Greater Richmond, and the Retail Alliance has served Greater Hampton Roads. Now the RMA and the RA are geographically expanding their coverage areas to serve *all* of Virginia's retailers.

The two organizations will continue to operate separately with their own programs and services, but their four staff lobbyists and outside paid lobbyists will work collectively with political contributions and grassroots advocacy through the new VRF.

The geographically expanded RMA and RA and the new VRF are different from other associations and chambers of commerce in important ways:

- The RMA, RA and VRF focus their efforts on storefront, Internet, hospitality and service retailing;
- Together, the RMA and RA have four staff lobbyists with many years of Virginia General Assembly experience – they know and understand government, retail and retailers;

- The RA was established in 1903 and the RMA in 1906, and they have historic track records of proven service to retailers;
- By expanding their respective footprints through the VRF, the partner organizations have contract and staff executives spread throughout Virginia to work with retailers through chapter or council activities, one-on-one contacts and grassroots involvement in the political process; and
- The Web sites of the partner organizations — www.retailmerchants.com and www.retailalliance.com — offer valuable industry and government relations information.

“The reason the RMA and the RA have been so successful over the last 100-plus years is their flexibility – their continual ability to change as retailing changes,” said William Baxter, the RMA’s president and chief executive officer.

He added, “We range from small, independent and franchise retailers to large regional and national big-box retailers; however, our associations’ primary focus is on Virginia-owned, Virginia-operated, and Virginia-staffed retail businesses.” This allows the organizations to speak with a high level of confidence and expertise about how a particular piece of legislation is going to affect retailers.

“As organizations entrusted to represent the interests of thousands of diverse merchants, it became apparent that creating a statewide legislative voice would be the most effective and efficient approach,” said Susan L. Milhoan, president and chief executive officer of the RA. “By collaborating in the creation of the VRF, we now represent the largest assemblage of retailers in Virginia.”

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