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Fighting For Retailers' Rights

(NAPSA)—In an effort to better serve their customers and show their love for America and appreciation of its privileges, merchants of all sizes, all over the country have banded together.

They're asking their legislators and others to protect them from contracts with suppliers that keep store owners from really running their own stores.

One example is the case of store owner Pat Leahy who hung an American flag above a cigarette ad in his shop. The display of patriotism apparently didn't sit right with the representative of the country's largest cigarette company.

Leahy was told initially "the flag must come down." His contract with the cigarette producer prohibited "signage" from being placed anywhere near the company's displays. Leahy objected, forcing the rep to call his headquarters. Only after that call did the rep tell Leahy "the flag was OK to hang for now."

"This is my store; why is someone telling me what I can or can't do in my store," Leahy wondered, adding, "it can really get under your skin when you own the store and worked in it for years and years."

Finally, he dropped the exclusive contract. Now, he strongly supports Retail Rights legislation that would prohibit any tobacco company from using its market power to prevent flags, ads or just about any other legitimate product from being promoted, advertised or displayed in retail stores.

"I support Retail Rights because retailers should have the last word in their own stores," Leahy says.

He's joined over 13,000 retailers, representing almost 16,000



When a store owner was told flying the American flag violated his contract with a cigarette supplier, the merchant joined thousands of others in demanding his rights.

individual stores, plus consumers, smaller tobacco companies and product manufacturers, who have signed declarations in support of Retail Rights legislation.

This legislation would return fair and open competition to the marketplace and let retailers manage their businesses in the best interests of their customers.

Efforts are under way to adopt or enforce laws in all 50 states to ensure that retailers, consumers and companies are protected from monopolistic practices in cigarette sales. Retailers could continue to enter into merchandising contracts with manufacturers but manufacturers could no longer limit the size of retailers' space directly or indirectly.

Many Americans, retailers and their customers, are asking state legislators where they stand on this issue of retail rights.

Anyone who wants to join in or learn more can visit www.retailrights.org.