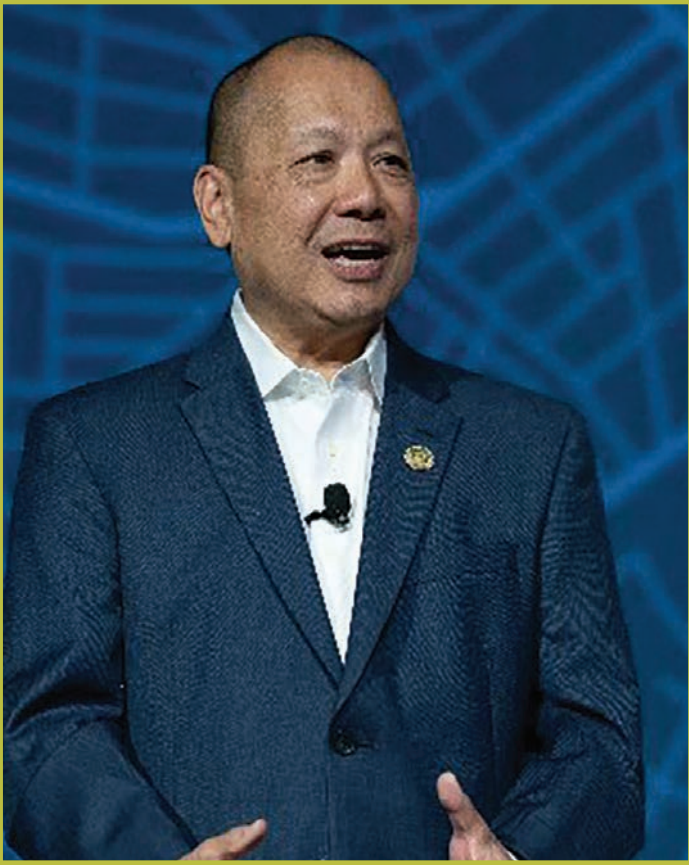




Retirement: *The Shelby Report of the West* salutes Ron Fong on his storied career

Outgoing president, CEO reflects on nearly 2 decades at helm of CGA

Ron Fong, president and CEO of the California Grocers Association, will retire at the end of the 2026, closing a tenure of nearly two decades in which he reshaped the association's political strategy, grew it from one organization into five and helped keep California's grocery stores open through a global pandemic.

Fong assumed leadership of the Sacramento-based association on March 31, 2008, after a nationwide search. He sat down with *The Shelby Report's* Bob Reeves to look back on a career that took him from the aisles of his family's independent grocery stores to the governor's kitchen cabinet.



Ron Fong

The lawyer who became a lobbyist

Fong never planned on association work; he planned on a courtroom.

While his family was preparing to sell their Sacramento-area grocery stores in the early 1990s, Fong enrolled in law school at Golden Gate University with his sights set on criminal law. He interned at the

Sacramento County District Attorney's office and had a job offer waiting as a prosecutor. The starting salary was \$39,000.

Then a friend mentioned that a lobbyist opening a new office for the state's credit union association needed summer help reading and writing briefs for \$15 an hour. Fong took the work and hit it off with his new boss, Bob Arnold.

Arnold told him, "You can do this job. What is the DA offering you?"

Fong told him the dollar figure and he said, "What if I offered you \$69,000 plus full benefits?"

Fong's response: "Where do I sign?"

Thus, he spent the next 13 years with the California Credit Union League, working his way up to chief lobbyist. When a friend told him the

California Grocers Association was searching for a new CEO, Fong threw his resume into a nationwide pool of numerous applicants that he later learned included sitting congressmen.

"Ignorance is bliss sometimes," he said. "I didn't know at the time how many competitors I had."

His first interview for the CGA job was with the hiring committee, which included then-Chairman Richie Morgan of Holiday Market, George Frahm of Stater Bros. Markets and Jim Amen of Super A Foods. The conversation quickly turned into talking shop.

"I knew as soon as I started talking to these fellas that I had a home," Fong said. "You know when you're with your own people."

That sense of belonging carried into his first year on the job, when Fong made it his goal to meet the industry's icons, including Bob Piccinini, whose Save Mart empire numbered more than 200 stores.



Dena Blizzard and Ron Fong at CGA 2023 Strategic Conference

3 generations, 4 stores and a grandson named for California's then governor

Before Ron Fong represented California's grocery industry in the state capitol, he stocked its shelves.

The Fong family's grocery story began with Ron's grandfather, Dan Fong, who immigrated from China in the 1930s and took every hard job available to Chinese men in that era. He worked the railroads, the laundromats and the restaurants before landing at a grocery store owned by another family.

"He said, 'This is something I can do,'" Fong recounted.

Dan Fong bought his own small store, Highway Market in West Sacramento, with his two brothers, and soon brought the rest of the family over from China, including Ron's father. Over the next 50 years and three generations, the Fongs worked their way up to four neighborhood stores in the Sacramento area.



Dan Fong and his brother Howard

'We are going to adapt'

Dan Fong ran his stores, and his family, with a clear philosophy of belonging.

"He said, 'We are in America, we are doing business with Americans, we are going to speak the language that our customers speak, and we are going to adapt to the lifestyle they have, not ours,'" Fong said.

Thus, the grandchildren were required to speak English, not Chinese, inside the stores.

That philosophy extended to the grandchildren's names. Dan Fong named each of them after the American movie stars and public figures who had influenced him. The oldest cousin, Marilyn, was named for Marilyn Monroe. Ginger was named for Ginger Rogers. Richard was named for Richard Burton.

And Ronald was named for Ronald Reagan, who by then had traded Hollywood for the governor's office.

"He said, 'You're going to go into politics and

you're going to be as famous as Governor Reagan,'" Fong said. "I didn't quite make it to governorship, but I get to speak to the governor."

Fong's father was his grandfather's opposite, a hard worker but deeply introverted. The gregariousness skipped a generation.

"My dad was happy that my grandfather and I have basically the same personality. We can talk to anybody, very social," Fong said. "I really took after him."

Neighborhood stores, neighborhood credit

The Fong stores were not big by today's standards, but they offered full-service meat, produce and customer service, and the family knew its neighbors

by name. Sometimes, Fong jokes, a little too well.

On the first and the 15th of each month, his father carried extra cash in his pocket to cash payroll checks for customers who did not want to visit a bank or did not have a banking relationship. When customers ran short before payday, he extended credit.

He would tell them, "Get what you need, take care of your family, and when the 15th comes or the first comes, come cash your check and pay off your bill," Fong said. "That was the cycle."

He dad kept it all in his head. He could say, "Hey, John, you know you owe me \$49. I'll take it out of this check," Fong recalled.

"That's where the independents come in, relationships where you do things for your neighbors."

Handwriting on the wall

The family's run ended in the early 1990s, when a young warehouse club now known as Costco opened two blocks from the Fongs' best store.

"My dad saw the handwriting on the wall," Fong



Highway Market circa 1941

said. "He said, 'We're gonna sell. Your mom and I are ready to be grandparents, and we've been working hard all these years.'"

But first, his parents made him an offer: they would keep working a few more years while Ron finished his education and pursued what he really wanted. Fong chose law school. The summer after he graduated, the stores were sold.

"He just could not wait," Fong said.

The plan his grandfather and father had drawn up for him, a Sacramento State degree, afternoon shifts, no football games and an eventual takeover of the family business, never came to pass. Instead, the store aisles led to the state capitol.

Visionary leadership and uplifting spirit

"Ron – what I admire most is how you have always wrapped your transformative and visionary leadership in a warm, generous and uplifting spirit. You never led with ego; you led with heart. You brought people together – store owners and corporate executives, Democrats and Republicans, competitors and collaborators – and you made them all feel heard, respected and valued. That is a rare gift."



Phil Miller

"Under your leadership, the California Grocers Association has become one of – if not the – most respected state trade associations in the entire country. You guided the California grocery industry to new heights, led the merger with the California Independent Grocers Association, championed the statewide plastic bag ban, steered the industry through a global pandemic and built an organization that represents nearly 500 retail members and over 250 suppliers. That is a legacy that will endure for generations."

– Phil Miller, Founder and Principal, RPM Global Holdings

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"I had no business being in his company," said Fong, adding that after months of trying, Piccinini finally took the appointment. The two never discussed the grocery business. They talked racing and the Golden State Warriors, and by the end of the day Piccinini had invited Fong to a game.

"He was just ordinary people," Fong said of the late leader.

Pivot to political relevance

Possibly the boldest move of Fong's tenure came early.

For decades, CGA had aligned itself with the California Republican Party, a natural fit for business



Ron Fong addresses the media.

owners wary of regulation. But Fong, drawing on his years as a lobbyist, saw the Republican caucus shrinking with each election cycle in a state with a Democratic supermajority.

"I went to our board and said, 'Look, here's my analysis. If you want to be relevant and actually get some legislation done, or killed, we need to quit ignoring the Democratic Party,'" Fong said. "I'm not saying we need to be progres-

sive, but we need to be in what is called the moderate Democratic caucus."

The moderates, Fong explained, are Democrats

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Colleague.
Mentor.
Friend.

Enjoy the
road ahead.



Congratulations, Ron!

With our gratitude and best wishes

LAZY ACRES
natural market

Bristol Farms
GOOD • FOOD • MARKET

 **New Leaf**
Community Markets

Fong a favorite with FIM program students

Ask Ron Fong how he has used his career to make the world a better place, and he does not point to the California state capitol. He points to the classroom.

For the past 12 years, Fong has guest-lectured annually in the University of Southern California Food Industry Management Program, the executive education program long associated with the Western Association of Food Chains. He credits Cynthia McCloud and WAFC's Pat Posey with opening the door.

"She was the first person to ask me to speak, and it was so successful," Fong said of McCloud. He added that she has shared that he is always among the most popular guest lecturers.

Fong's formula is simple: no textbook, no test. He takes the entire class for a full Friday morning session, from 9 a.m. to noon, and turns it into a working legislature.

After a session on advocacy, he breaks the students into their six capstone groups and hands each a scenario drawn from real-life legislation.

Each group must write a bill and present it to the room, with classmates voting yes or vetoing after grilling the presenters.

"I tell them, 'Those of you in the audience, I want you to ask the tough questions, just like they drill me in the legislature,'" Fong said.

"How are you going to pay for this? What makes you think this or that?" Boy, do they love it. They get up out of their chairs. It is something brand new to them."

The exercise makes a larger point that Fong believes every rising grocery executive needs to hear: there is more to the business than selling groceries off the shelf.

"You have to be politically aware," he said.

His commitment does not end when the lecture does. Fong extends an open invitation to every capstone group in the programs he works with, which also include Cal Poly and Sacramento State.

"I tell them I'm not going to be any one group's coach; I'll coach all of you. Whenever you have a question on whether your idea is going to work or not, you just call me," he said. "Every one of the capstones called me. We spent hours on the phone. You teach them things that you learned along the way."

With McCloud now retired, this year marked Fong's first working with Andrea Dimond.

"She said, 'Ron, I have no idea what you do,' so she took a video of it and she posted it herself,"



USC FIM Class of 2023

Fong said. "We have become fast friends since that session."

For a man stepping away from the industry's front lines, the teaching may be the part he treasures most.

"That's how I make the world a better place, by teaching our students," he said. "It's been the most enjoyable part of my off time."

He 'more than proved' CGA made right choice

"Ron, it is hard to believe that almost 20 years have gone by. I still remember the first interviews with all the candidates – I think we had 12 people hoping to fill the role Peter [Larkin] had vacated. It was a big job to fill, and with that being my year as chairman, I felt the weight of choosing the right person: someone who could not only pick up where Peter left off and take things even further but also be committed for the long haul. We needed someone with passion for the grocery industry and a true desire to be part of it."



Richie Morgan

"After your first interview, I knew you were the right candidate. I still had to persuade the search committee ... I will never forget making the call to tell you we had found our new president."

"Now, almost 20 years later, I can say with complete confidence that you more than proved we made the right choice. I want to thank you for making that year of my chairmanship, during such an important transition, a truly great one."

"More importantly, what you have done for the California Grocers Association – elevating its standing among trade organizations and earning the ear of state and local government in what is without question the toughest state for business – has been nothing short of remarkable. Congratulations Ron, and thank you so much for your leadership, your dedication and the lasting impact you have made."

– **Richie Morgan, Executive Chairman, North State Grocery**



Cal Poly Capstone group with Ron Fong at NGA Show

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by party affiliation but business-minded in philosophy, and willing to listen.

Selling that shift to a board stocked with strong-minded Republican businesspeople was another matter.

"Try going to tell Jack Brown that we are going to have to negotiate with the Democrats," said Fong, referring to the late Stater Bros. Markets chairman. "Back then, Jack Brown, Bob Piccinini – these are the legends in our field – and you have this newbie coming up and telling them we need to change if we want to be relevant."

It took a year or two of persuasion, but the board came around. The payoff would arrive years later, in the middle of a crisis.

Securing seat at governor's table

When Gavin Newsom emerged as the likely successor to Gov. Jerry Brown, Fong went back to his board with a simple



Ron Fong and California Gov. Gavin Newsom



Ron Fong handles frequent media appearances.

question: Do we want to wait on the sidelines for eight years, or be relevant?

They told him the decision was his. He decided on relevance, spending years building a working relationship with Newsom through negotiation and cooperation on legislation.

When COVID-19 hit in 2020 and the governor faced the question of whether to close grocery stores the way he had restaurants, he called Fong.

"I was able to convince him, 'Governor, that's the last thing you want to do. You close the grocery stores, you already don't have restaurants, there's no outlet for food, and then you're going to have riots,'" Fong said.

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What does it take to build a strategy that will last?

How can manufacturers navigate today's retail challenges while building long-term growth through strategy, execution and partnership?

Strategy in the grocery industry now goes far beyond planning. As retailers face increased competition from mass merchants, private label gains share and shoppers stick more closely to their lists, manufacturers need partners who can connect retailer relationships, market intelligence and execution to drive growth.

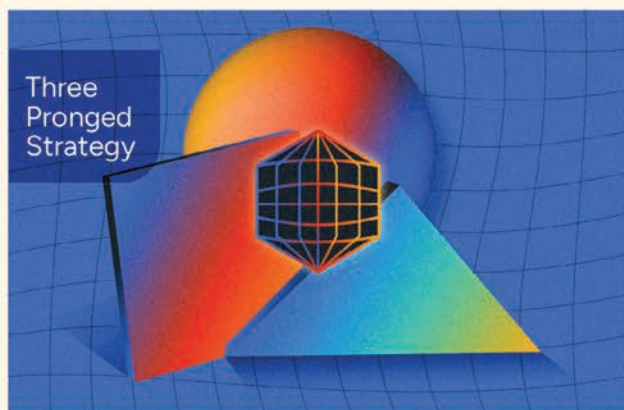


Nicole Jevsevar

Nicole Jevsevar, SVP of strategy at Schraad Sales & Marketing, discusses how manufacturers can turn strategy into measurable, lasting results.

How has the role of strategy evolved in today's grocery industry?

Strategy today goes far beyond planning. It starts with understanding customers, aligning with client goals and turning insights into actions that create measurable results. As the retail landscape becomes more complex, manufacturers need partners who can connect retailer relationships, market intelligence and execution to drive growth.



What are the biggest challenges manufacturers are facing today?

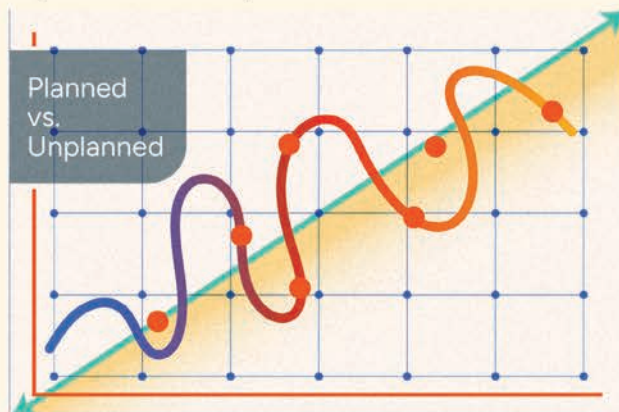
We're seeing three major trends. Retailers continue to face increased competition from mass merchants, private label continues to gain share, and consumers are becoming increasingly intentional with their purchases by sticking to shopping lists. Those realities require manufacturers to think differently about how they create visibility, drive trial and earn repeat purchases.

How can manufacturers overcome those challenges?

Success requires creativity paired with execution. That means leveraging retail media, strengthening



digital shelf presence, creating compelling in-store programs and identifying opportunities that capture shoppers' attention. Whether it's themed events, secondary displays or promotional partnerships, brands have to create reasons for shoppers to discover products beyond what's already on their list.



What role does retail execution play in delivering results?

Execution is where strategy becomes reality. At Schraad, we believe every level of retail matters, from headquarters to the individual store. Maintaining a consistent presence at the shelf allows us to execute planned initiatives while also identifying unplanned opportunities that help our clients win in the marketplace.

Why is investing in data and insights so important?

Data alone isn't enough. The value comes from transforming information into actionable insights. By combining consumption data with customer knowledge and retailer relationships, we're able to make informed recommendations that help clients respond quickly to changing market conditions and uncover new opportunities for growth.

How does Schraad's culture influence the way you serve clients?

One phrase perfectly captures our culture: "Get Better Every Day." It's a

mindset that encourages continuous improvement across every department and every role. When everyone is committed to improving together, we're able to deliver more value to our clients while building stronger partnerships and a stronger organization.

What does success look like for Schraad moving forward?

For us, success is measured by impact. We want to create meaningful results for our clients, invest in our people and strengthen the communities we serve. Whether that's helping manufacturers grow, supporting organizations like the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Alzheimer's Association, or finding better ways to work together internally, our focus is on making a positive impact every day.

About the Expert

Nicole Jevsevar serves as SVP of strategy at Schraad Sales & Marketing, where she helps manufacturers drive growth through strategic planning, retail execution and collaborative partnerships. With a background spanning consumer packaged goods, organizational strategy and large-scale change management, Jevsevar brings a holistic perspective to helping brands navigate today's evolving retail landscape.

At Schraad, Jevsevar works alongside cross-functional teams to transform insights into action, connecting data, retailer relationships and execution to deliver measurable business results. She is passionate about

fostering a culture of continuous improvement, believing that the pursuit of getting better every day is what drives long-term success for both clients and team members.

She also champions Schraad's commitment to making a meaningful impact beyond the business, supporting initiatives that strengthen communities while building lasting partnerships across the industry.





MARKETSHARE

REGIONAL CBSA S.CA-NV

*Bakersfield, Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise,
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura,
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad,
San Luis Obispo-Paso Robles, Santa Maria-Santa Barbara*

NAME	NO. OF STORES	SALES	% OF MARKET
WALMART INC.	182	\$5,179,208,400	9.29%
VONS	186	\$4,875,184,000	8.74%
RALPHS	183	\$4,484,192,000	8.04%
STATER BROS. MARKETS	172	\$4,425,190,000	7.94%
ALBERTSON'S SUPERMARKET	168	\$4,104,026,000	7.36%
SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET	124	\$3,050,292,000	5.47%
TRADER JOE'S	135	\$2,386,189,000	4.28%
COSTCO WHOLESALE	82	\$1,993,265,700	3.58%
FOOD 4 LESS	92	\$1,808,102,000	3.24%
VALLARTA SUPERMARKETS	51	\$1,603,133,000	2.88%
GROCERY OUTLET	128	\$1,409,194,000	2.53%
NORTHGATE GONZÁLEZ MARKET	47	\$1,352,916,000	2.43%
TARGET	219	\$1,350,354,000	2.42%
WHOLE FOODS MARKET	50	\$1,327,372,000	2.38%
SMART & FINAL EXTRA!	186	\$1,237,581,000	2.22%
EL SUPER	53	\$1,213,827,000	2.18%
SMITH'S FOOD & DRUG CENTER	39	\$1,124,054,000	2.02%
GELSON'S MARKETS	29	\$845,639,000	1.52%
CARDENAS MARKETS	37	\$842,953,000	1.51%
WINCO FOODS	21	\$815,909,000	1.46%
PAVILIONS	29	\$687,507,000	1.23%
SUPERIOR GROCERS	72	\$650,040,000	1.17%
SAM'S CLUB	28	\$646,471,040	1.16%
99 RANCH MARKET	29	\$476,984,000	0.86%
ALDI	93	\$441,912,000	0.79%
AMAZON FRESH	22	\$421,323,000	0.76%
BRISTOL FARMS	14	\$296,633,000	0.53%
MOTHER'S MARKET & KITCHEN	76	\$287,672,000	0.52%
SEAFOOD CITY SUPERMARKET	18	\$242,367,000	0.43%
JONS MARKETPLACE	13	\$186,521,000	0.33%
RESTAURANT DEPOT	14	\$164,681,000	0.30%
FOODMAXX	6	\$157,957,000	0.28%
H MART	14	\$157,125,000	0.28%
ALL OTHERS	613	\$5,509,359,000	9.88%
GRAND TOTAL	3,225	\$55,755,133,140	100.00%

This month's data reflects expanded Market Areas with a \$2 million annual sales threshold. ACV (sales) is derived from verifiable sales volume figures, where available, or through predictive modeling estimations; the primary source of model is the U.S. Department of Commerce-supplied data on sales per employee for each six-digit NAICS code at the county level. Grocery sales figures for mass merchandisers and warehouse clubs were calculated based on percentages found in the companies' annual reports. Data Axle has been compiling B2B data for more than 40 years through 4,000-plus sources where figures are verified daily. It includes 15 million businesses and more than 170 million executive contacts and employees.

REGIONAL CBSA E.WA-ID-MT

Coeur d'Alene, Missoula, Spokane-Spokane Valley

NAME	NO. OF STORES	SALES	% OF MARKET
URM STORES INC.	47	\$725,802,500	25.71%
SAFEWAY	23	\$473,105,000	16.76%
WALMART INC.	13	\$372,372,000	13.19%
FRED MEYER	4	\$238,371,000	8.44%
COSTCO WHOLESALE	6	\$182,882,120	6.48%
ALBERTSONS	9	\$160,195,000	5.67%
WINCO FOODS	5	\$155,705,000	5.51%
GROCERY OUTLET	10	\$74,745,000	2.65%
SMITH'S FOOD & DRUG CENTER	2	\$63,814,000	2.26%
TRADER JOE'S	3	\$50,248,000	1.78%
NATURAL GROCERS	5	\$42,452,000	1.50%
TARGET	6	\$39,957,200	1.42%
HOME STORAGE CENTER	2	\$32,264,000	1.14%
MISSOULA FRESH MARKET	2	\$26,185,000	0.93%
SOPHIE ALBERT	1	\$18,817,000	0.67%
INDIANA MARKET	1	\$18,285,000	0.65%
FAIRCHILD AFB COMMISSARY	1	\$16,102,000	0.57%
MARKUS FOODS	2	\$14,727,000	0.52%
WOODY'S COUNTRY STORE	1	\$14,575,000	0.52%
SHADLE FOOD MARKET	1	\$10,098,000	0.36%
DS MARKET WASHINGTON	1	\$9,552,000	0.34%
MAIN MARKET	1	\$8,188,000	0.29%
ORANGE STREET FOOD FARM	1	\$6,932,000	0.25%
ALL OTHERS	18	\$68,044,000	2.41%
GRAND TOTAL	165	\$2,823,417,820	100.00%

REGIONAL CBSA WASHINGTON

*Bellingham, Bremerton-Silverdale-Port Orchard, Kennewick-Richland,
Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater,
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, Wenatchee, Yakima*

NAME	NO. OF STORES	SALES	% OF MARKET
SAFEWAY	162	\$4,258,113,000	22.05%
FRED MEYER	65	\$3,998,663,000	20.71%
WALMART INC.	57	\$1,679,926,800	8.70%
QFC SUPERMARKETS	55	\$1,285,861,000	6.66%
COSTCO WHOLESALE	36	\$961,177,740	4.98%
GROCERY OUTLET	72	\$706,251,000	3.66%
WINCO FOODS	18	\$631,451,000	3.27%
TRADER JOE'S	24	\$563,367,000	2.92%
ALBERTSONS	19	\$510,493,000	2.64%
URM STORES INC.	28	\$462,010,000	2.39%
CARRS SUPERMARKETS	16	\$428,927,000	2.22%
HAGGEN FOOD & PHARMACY	15	\$380,700,000	1.97%
WHOLE FOODS MARKET	10	\$320,420,000	1.66%
PCC COMMUNITY MARKETS	12	\$247,283,000	1.28%
THRIFTWAY MARKETS	12	\$205,011,000	1.06%
METROPOLITAN MARKET	7	\$195,253,000	1.01%
TARGET	34	\$188,688,200	0.98%
IGA SUPERMARKETS	18	\$173,912,000	0.90%
SAAR'S SUPER SAVER FOODS	6	\$127,035,000	0.66%
SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET	4	\$91,547,000	0.47%
RED APPLE MARKETS	9	\$90,601,000	0.47%
FIESTA FOODS	3	\$89,183,000	0.46%
UWAJIMAYA ASIAN MARKET	3	\$59,370,000	0.31%
99 RANCH MARKET	2	\$57,992,000	0.30%
AMAZON FRESH	3	\$41,810,000	0.22%
ALL OTHERS	198	\$1,557,329,000	8.06%
GRAND TOTAL	888	\$19,312,374,740	100.00%

STATE
WYOMING

NAME	NO. OF STORES	SALES	% OF MARKET
WALMART INC.	10	\$304,305,600	31.75%
SMITH'S FOOD & DRUG – KROGER	7	\$152,207,000	15.88%
ALBERTSONS	8	\$146,344,000	15.27%
SAFEWAY	3	\$54,150,000	5.65%
KING SOOPERS	1	\$51,562,000	5.38%
WHOLE FOODS MARKET	1	\$46,394,000	4.84%
SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET	1	\$30,348,000	3.17%
SAM'S CLUB	2	\$30,325,120	3.16%
RIDLEYS FAMILY MARKETS	3	\$21,503,000	2.24%
MR. D'S FOOD CENTER	1	\$17,913,000	1.87%
BENEDICT'S MARKET	1	\$15,316,000	1.60%
HOME STORAGE CENTER	2	\$14,394,000	1.50%
BODEGA	1	\$13,562,000	1.42%
TARGET	3	\$11,343,600	1.18%
NATURAL GROCERS	2	\$8,018,000	0.84%
DON'S SUPERMARKET	2	\$7,945,000	0.83%
MARKET J M ELITE	1	\$7,779,000	0.81%
MANGY MOOSE CELLARS & GROCERY	1	\$5,354,000	0.56%
TEXAS TRAIL MARKET	1	\$4,125,000	0.43%
DUBOIS SUPER FOODS	1	\$3,583,000	0.37%
ASPENS MARKET	1	\$2,855,000	0.30%
CREEKSIDE MARKET & DELI	1	\$2,855,000	0.30%
FIVE & DIME GENERAL STORE	1	\$2,499,000	0.26%
ALL OTHERS	2	\$3,684,000	0.38%
GRAND TOTAL	57	\$958,364,320	100.00%

STATE
OREGON

NAME	NO. OF STORES	SALES	% OF MARKET
FRED MEYER	54	\$3,045,334,000	25.96%
SAFEWAY	95	\$1,910,003,000	16.28%
WALMART INC.	43	\$973,980,000	8.30%
WINCO FOODS	24	\$859,875,000	7.33%
ALBERTSONS	28	\$681,909,000	5.81%
NEW SEASONS MARKET	17	\$630,292,000	5.37%
GROCERY OUTLET	63	\$463,414,000	3.95%
COSTCO WHOLESALE	13	\$391,712,860	3.34%
MARKET OF CHOICE	12	\$315,449,000	2.69%
TRADER JOE'S	14	\$279,820,000	2.38%
RAY'S FOOD PLACE	23	\$197,827,000	1.69%
ROTH'S FRESH MARKETS	9	\$169,228,000	1.44%
WHOLE FOODS MARKET	10	\$151,963,000	1.30%
THRIFTWAY SUPERMARKETS	11	\$115,212,000	0.98%
NATURAL GROCERS	14	\$106,456,000	0.91%
SHERM'S THUNDERBIRD MARKET	4	\$102,523,000	0.87%
TARGET	19	\$96,595,400	0.82%
QFC	4	\$70,031,000	0.60%
WAREMART BY WINCO	3	\$65,537,000	0.56%
MCKAY'S MARKET	11	\$62,427,000	0.53%
HOME STORAGE CENTER	5	\$62,255,000	0.53%
ASHLAND FOOD CO-OP	1	\$33,263,000	0.28%
FOOD 4 LESS	2	\$31,227,000	0.27%
SHOP SMART	4	\$30,462,000	0.26%
RED APPLE MARKETPLACE	3	\$29,663,000	0.25%
ALL OTHERS	148	\$856,392,000	7.30%
GRAND TOTAL	634	\$11,732,850,260	100.00%

STATE
UTAH

NAME	NO. OF STORES	SALES	% OF MARKET
WALMART INC.	49	\$1,115,691,600	28.09%
SMITH'S FOOD & DRUG – KROGER	56	\$699,887,000	17.62%
MACEYS	24	\$327,808,000	8.25%
HARMONS	20	\$317,261,000	7.99%
COSTCO WHOLESALE	14	\$269,604,880	6.79%
SAM'S CLUB	8	\$139,995,520	3.52%
WINCO FOODS	9	\$136,350,000	3.43%
FRESH MARKET	9	\$94,880,000	2.39%
TARGET	18	\$92,272,600	2.32%
REAM'S FOOD STORES	7	\$65,772,000	1.66%
DAN'S FRESH MARKET	4	\$53,930,000	1.36%
HOME STORAGE CENTER	12	\$52,667,000	1.33%
WHOLE FOODS MARKET	4	\$50,000,000	1.26%
SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET	5	\$44,077,000	1.11%
DICK'S FRESH MARKET	2	\$40,189,000	1.01%
TRADER JOE'S	5	\$40,136,000	1.01%
LIN'S FRESH MARKET	5	\$37,523,000	0.94%
LUCKY	5	\$31,217,000	0.79%
NATURAL GROCERS	8	\$28,575,000	0.72%
RIDLEYS FAMILY MARKETS	4	\$27,211,000	0.69%
PARK CITY FRESH MARKET	1	\$26,263,000	0.66%
LEE'S MARKETPLACE	4	\$21,360,000	0.54%
BOWMAN'S MARKET	1	\$19,520,000	0.49%
KENT'S MARKET	2	\$18,416,000	0.46%
ALBERTSONS	2	\$17,091,000	0.43%
ASSOCIATED FOOD STORES	3	\$17,040,000	0.43%
THE MARKET AT PARK CITY	1	\$16,808,000	0.42%
PETERSONS FRESH MARKET	1	\$14,780,000	0.37%
TAYLORSVILLE FRESH MARKET	1	\$12,317,000	0.31%
GOOD EARTH MARKETS	5	\$11,922,000	0.30%
KOHLERS FOOD STORES	1	\$11,437,000	0.29%
PAYSON MARKET	1	\$11,437,000	0.29%
SOELBERG'S MARKET	1	\$11,304,000	0.28%
ALL OTHERS	27	\$97,063,000	2.44%
GRAND TOTAL	319	\$3,971,805,600	100.00%

As an investor, developer or tenant, Shelby Marketshares are designed to give you the most up-to-date industry outlook by comparing current retail market trends in the grocery industry for each local market. Stay on top of changes in your local markets by subscribing to *The Shelby Report* for your region or request Market Data for a small fee by contacting Circulation at 888-498-0771 or email MarketShares@shelbypublishing.com.

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FOR PUBLICATION



FOR E-NEWSLETTER





Veteran lobbyist's playbook: Lessons from 19 years at the top

- Listen before you decide. Early in his tenure, Ron Fong told a senior staffer to abandon an emergency protocol manual she had spent three years building so she could help with lobbying. Her reaction, tears in her eyes, told him he had misjudged. "I didn't ask the right questions. I put myself ahead of it. My attitude was, if it is not important to me, it should not be important to you," he said. "That was an important lesson in listening to your employees."

- Meet people where they are. Board chairs arrive with different levels of experience. Jonathan Mayes needed no coaching. Bob Parriott, a one-store operator from Twain Harte who had never sat on a board before chairing CGA's 52-member panel, once announced on a live microphone that he had lost his place in the script. Fong learned to simplify, letting Parriott handle basic motions while Fong did more of the reporting. "Communication with people needs to be based on the individual," he said.



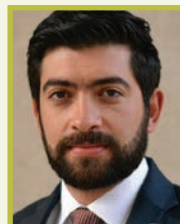
Lobbying to end food deserts

- You can only connect the dots looking backward. Fong's favorite life lesson comes from Steve Jobs. "You can never predict what's going to happen the next three steps moving forward. Nobody has a perfect plan," he said. "You can only connect the dots by looking backward." Fong's own dots run from a family grocery business ended by Costco, to law school, to a \$15-an-hour summer job that turned into a lobbying career, to a resume tossed into a nationwide CEO search he never expected to win. "Now I know why I went here and here and here, and why I was placed here at CGA."

- Buy the turkeys. Every elected official will call member stores around Thanksgiving and Christmas asking for a donation of turkeys to give away. Write the check, Fong advises. "That is the cheapest \$5,000 you've ever spent. They're going to remember you forever."



He's a leader who fosters collaboration



Sergio Arturo

"The greatness of Ron Fong's legacy can be seen and felt with his unique ability to bring together grocery leaders from every corner of our industry, whether large or small chains, independents, ethnic retailers or traditional retailers, and bring them together at the same table."

"He is a leader who builds bridges, fosters collaboration and inspires people to work together for the good of our industry. With his humility, respect for others and servant leadership approach, Ron has created a culture that will continue to influence and strengthen our industry for years to come."

— **Sergio Arturo Gonzalez, Director of Customer Journey, Northgate González Market**

That's my little turkey story."

- Deputize everyone. If Fong could inspire one movement, it would be mass advocacy. His six lobbyists cannot cover 120 state legislators and 300 cities, so he built a program assigning key members to shadow and build relationships with their local legislators. "Politics is all about personal relationships," he said. "Elected officials want to listen to people that can vote for them, not so much the registered lobbyists. If all 500 of our members were politically active, that would make our job easier in the state capital."

From page 20

"After days of conversations, he said, 'OK, we will keep you open but under some restrictions.' I said I'm fine with that, just keep us open."

Grocers adapted to limited hours, plexiglass shields and enhanced cleaning protocols, and stores stayed open.

Newsom, recognizing a reasonable negotiating partner, appointed Fong to the governor's bipartisan task force on business and jobs recovery, a group of about 50 business leaders that included Apple CEO Tim Cook.

"We were almost like a little kitchen cabinet for him," Fong said. "Whenever he needed advice, he

would draw on the task force. We met every week and established a really nice relationship."

One organization becomes five

When Fong arrived at CGA, it was a single association. He leaves behind five distinct entities.

CGA remains the parent organization, alongside the CGA Educational Foundation, which funds college scholarships and career development for member company employees and their dependents.

Aisle 3 Concepts LLC was formed to purchase the association's headquarters building in downtown Sacramento, separating its real estate holdings from association work.

RMS Inc., formerly known as Shopping Cart Corporation, handles back-end and logistical services.

The newest addition, Circular CRV, is a recycling company launched last year.

"We are five strong now," Fong said.

'Dim sum diplomacy' and CIGA merger

Among the milestones of Fong's tenure was the 2014 acquisition of the California Independent Grocers Association, which brought the state's independents under the CGA umbrella while preserving their own agenda. Under the merged bylaws, an independent is defined as an operator

with 11 stores or fewer.

The deal took years of relationship building, and none required more patience than the one with Mike Stone of Mollie Stone's Markets, the association's largest independent and the merger's most vocal skeptic.

"He really embodies the independent. He didn't want to be mixed up with the large chains and be lost in the shuffle," Fong said.

Rather than pitch Stone on membership, Fong tried a different approach his staff came to call "dim sum diplomacy." Whenever he was in the Bay Area, he would pick up dim sum in San Francisco's Chinatown, swing by and simply sit down to eat and talk.

"We did that for years," Fong said. "That's when he found out I came from an independent background. My parents owned grocery stores. Had we not had these conversations, the trust wouldn't have been built."

Stone became one of the association's biggest supporters, and his son Elliott, COO of Mollie Stone's Markets, now sits on the CGA board.

Winning over CIGA's leadership took similar legwork. Fong made repeated trips to Twain Harte, California, to take single-store operator Bob Parriott to lunch. Part of the merger agreement placed Parriott on CGA's executive committee, and he became board chairman the following year.

Please see page 32



Joe Perez and Ron Fong at the FISMC Leadership Summit

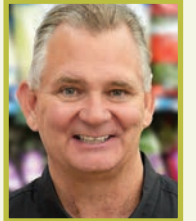


Ron Fong and other distinguished panelists at the FISMC 2026 Leadership Summit in Anaheim, California



Consistently stood up for what mattered

"Over the years, Ron's leadership and advocacy have been invaluable to The Save Mart Companies and to our industry. He consistently stood up for what mattered, and was always generous with time, insight and support."



Jim Perkins

"Ron has been a true partner and friend to so many of us, and the impact of his work will be felt long after this next chapter begins. We are deeply grateful for everything Ron has done for the grocery business and our people, and we wish him all the best in retirement."

— Jim Perkins, President and CEO, The Save Mart Companies



**Congratulations on
Your Retirement, Ron!**

YOU'VE HATCHED A LASTING LEGACY

As one of the world's leading egg suppliers, Eggs Unlimited has always believed our business is about more than eggs, it's about people and partnerships.

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Happy Retirement RON FONG!



We celebrate your outstanding contributions, leadership, and dedication. Your journey has inspired many, and your legacy will continue to shine.



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Championed food industry with integrity, heart

"Few leaders have shaped California's grocery industry as profoundly as Ron Fong.

"Throughout his remarkable career, Ron brought people together, championed our industry and led with integrity, vision and heart. His impact will be felt for generations, and we are proud to have called him a trusted partner and friend."

— Kelly Mullin, President of Merchandising, Albertsons Companies/California Region



Kelly Mullin

A regular contributor to The Shelby Report of the West, Ron Fong penned the column "California Perspective" for many years. At right and on ensuing pages are some examples of that popular feature.

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Column

RETAILER/WHOLESALER NEWS

Cumulative Effects of Legislation Coming to Bear in 2016

California lawmakers returned to Sacramento in January ready for action. Hearing deadlines loomed for bills introduced in 2015, the first year of the two-year session, and a 2016 bill introduction deadline of mid-February was not far behind. But a bigger issue also looms large, and likely will color much of 2016 for California lawmakers: elections.

CGA will hold its 2016 Grocers Day at the Capitol on March 29 at the Citizen Hotel, 926 J Street in Sacramento. Visit cagrocers.com for more information.



Just because California has become largely an ATM for presidential candidates, and Republicans are struggling to make the U.S. Senate contest competitive, we are not immune to high-stakes politics this year. That has much to do with the confluence of three changes to our state political ground rules over the past decade, as well as some processes seen by many as sacrosanct.

First, let's look at the changes converging in 2016. Back in 2008, voters approved Proposition 11, modifying the way California legislative districts are drawn. The proposal was placed on the ballot by the Legislature itself, with urban legend noting it was the strange product of budget negotiations.

It took the power to draw legislative districts away from the Legislature itself and instead entrusted a Citizen's Redistricting Commission with the job. Many had hoped that would bring more moderation to the political checkerboard—more districts drawn as "toss-ups" rather than sure things for

California Perspective

by Ronald K. Fong, President & CEO, California Grocers Association

Fong became President and CEO of CGA in March 2008. A native Californian and a lawyer, he joined CGA after 12 years with the California Credit Union League (CCUL). At CGA, Fong serves as the association's chief legislative and political advocate and oversees government relations, member services, conventions and communication programs. He also is president of the California Grocers Association Educational Foundation (CGAEF). His grandfather started Carmichael Supermarket, the first grocery market in Carmichael, California, in 1941, and Fong worked in the grocery business as he grew up.



either Democrats or Republicans. That did not really come to fruition.

Fast on the heels of that change, lawmakers asked voters to approve both a "jungle primary"—where the top two vote-getters regardless of party advanced to the general election—and a change to term limits law that reduced the total number of cumulative years of service but allowed it all in one house of the Legislature.

Now, none of those changes independently seem like they would create electoral stakes any higher than in prior years, but put them all together and the impact is quite startling. Better than half of the Legislature elected in November 2016 will be locked in for a decade. With so few truly competitive seats, the power of incumbency is all but certain to see those newly elected and those re-elected in 2016 stay in office until elections in 2026.

Certainly, California has seen its share of political scandal forcing folks from office (three senators in a single year recently), but nothing near what would be required to spur actual change over the next decade. And many lawmakers will need to create what they think is a solid track record of legislation (aka new laws) to help bolster their efforts at incumbency.

And not only will voters be faced with those weighty decisions, but they also are likely to face a near-record number of ballot initiatives and referenda. In California, a state with a population of nearly 40 million and just under 17 million registered voters, one need only gather 365,880 valid voter signatures and submit a nominal filing fee to place an initiative statute on the ballot.

In 2015 and 2016, the California Attorney General's office has processed more than 125 initiatives, with four having already been approved to appear on the ballot. If even 10 percent ultimately qualify, voters will face a dizzying array of choices on myriad policy issues.

* Kimberly-Clark

Kimberly-Clark honors Ron Fong's Extraordinary Leadership and his dedication to the CGA





Congratulations,
RON FONG,
on an Extraordinary Career!

Few people leave behind a legacy as meaningful as yours. Throughout your career, you have been a steadfast advocate for the grocery industry, a trusted partner, and a friend to so many. Your passion for serving others, your commitment to doing what's right, and your unwavering support of retailers and suppliers have made a profound difference.

Thank you for your years of leadership, mentorship, and friendship.

Enjoy every moment of your next chapter. You have certainly earned it.

Congratulations on your retirement, Ron!

-Heritage Grocers Group



**Heritage
Grocers** Group



Secret weapon: Writing for clarity

Ron Fong says getting his thoughts down on paper helps him if he is facing high-stakes meetings or decisions.

"Writing it out is my secret weapon. I've always been a writer, and there is nothing better when you're frustrated or stressed about something than to get it all out by writing. I come up with some of my best ideas that way.

"I have a journal that I write things into when I'm in these times of stress or there's a business worry or a decision that I have to make. Let's say it's a personnel decision – weighing out the pros and the cons, what's going to happen, and I literally sit down and write it out and say, 'here's

the good things about it, here's the bad things about it.' I read it over, and then it makes it much easier for me to come up with a decision.

"I think it goes back to law school. In law school, we are taught and trained not to have all the answers at the tip of your tongue – although most lawyers think they know everything – but how to go and research what you need, and how to read and get what you need out of it. I'm so used to having the answers in a case brief or something like that, that I can read and come to a conclusion in my mind mechanically.



Ron Fong received *The Sacramento Business Journal* Most Admired CEO award in 2024.

"So I do the same thing with personal business or personal stress – sit down and write it all out, and I just let it sit there for another 24 hours, maybe 48 hours, come back, and the second time it's much more clear."

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Column

California Perspective

by Ronald K. Fong, President & CEO, California Grocers Association

California's political outlook appears even more unpredictable than in years past due to an intersection of events that don't happen very often.

From the election of the first new governor in eight years, to a legislature in flux due to a number of recent resignations resulting from inappropriate behavior on the part of some of its members, to new taxes going into effect, to the always unpredictable actions coming out of Washington, D.C. – 2018 is shaping up to be a year to remember. But will this year be remembered as a good one or bad one for the grocery industry? The signs point to a good one.

As you may recall, there was much political uncertainty at the time last year when the California Legislature prepared to begin the first year of its newest two-year session. Much of that uncertainty was attributed to the election of a new president with a decidedly conservative agenda, which led Democrats leaders of both legislative houses here in California pledging to fight against his agenda as it pertained, mostly, to immigration and the environment.

At the time, the "TLC" as the bad guy" scenario was thought to be potentially harmful to our industry and other business sectors as it would take legislative attention away from the business sector and focus it on how to lessen the impacts of Washington, D.C.'s conservative agenda on the people of California. This did indeed prove to be the case for the most part. There were no major anti-business pieces of legislation that survived the legislature and signed into law.

The expectation is that this year will be no different. Legislative leaders here in Sacramento have decided down on their pledges to resist Washington, D.C., which, again, ought to bode well for the grocery industry and other businesses.

If last year was any indication, they will continue prioritizing legislation that would lessen the impacts of actions taken in our nation's capital and, quite frankly, leave us alone. Another thing that is likely to bode the focus on business by the legislature include a focus on legislation to deal with several harassment in the capital and other workplace environments in the wake of numerous scandals involving state legislators, lobbyists and staffers.

And, last, we forget, every seat in the State Assembly and a number of seats in the State Senate are up for election. It is always worth noting that legislators have a tendency to become more risk averse in an election year, which might to work out in favor of our industry.

As with all forecasts of this nature, it must be kept in mind that past performance does not guarantee future results. That being said, we will keep our fingers crossed here in Sacramento that future results stay in line with past performance in light of the many similarities we face this year as we did last year.

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MIKE STONE
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• Monday Morning: All day long breakfast
• Monday: All day long breakfast
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• Enjoy a variety of entertainment, food & entertainment, followed by an all-night social
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• Tuesday Morning: General session
• Tuesday: All day long luncheon
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• Round-trip ferry travel
• Round-trip cruise travel

Report fee, valued at \$150 includes:
• 100+ Museum passes include your Museum Research number when registered
• 100+ Museum passes include your Museum Research number when registered

CONGRATULATIONS



to **RON FONG**

"Congratulations to Ron Fong on his outstanding leadership as President and CEO of the California Grocers Association. Ron has made an indelible mark on California's grocery industry through his unwavering commitment to protecting, supporting, and advocating for grocers throughout the state. His leadership and dedication have strengthened our industry and created a lasting legacy for generation to come."



Mike Stone
President and Owner of
Mollie Stone's Markets

MARS SNACKING

On behalf of all of us at Mars Snacking,
we wish CGA President Ron Fong
congratulations on his retirement!



Thank you, Ron, for your years
of remarkable leadership,
advocacy and partnership.
Enjoy your well-earned
retirement.



From page 25

Battles in the statehouse

Fong is candid about the association's toughest recurring opponent: organized labor.

"Most of the bills that they introduce, we don't like. They always want more bodies in the grocery stores," he said. "Labor and electricity are two of the most expensive line items for stores, and grocery stores operate on a small margin."

Asked whether the state has helped or hindered grocers, Fong put the ledger at a little better than 50/50. The most recent victory was the defeat of self-checkout legislation two years running, labor's top priority.

The bill would have required one dedicated employee to monitor no more than two self-checkout stations, barred purchases of more than 15 items and prohibited sales of items from locked cabinets through the machines.

"The restrictions would have cost us more money to hire the people to watch over the checkstands than it would save having self-checkout," Fong said. "The bill was unreasonable."

Not every fight can be won outright, and Fong points to the state's single-use plastic bag ban a



Ron Fong addresses the media.

decade ago as a case study in reading the political tea leaves. The bill was going to pass with or without CGA's blessing, he said, because legislative leadership had the votes and the governor wanted the environmental win. So the association negotiated an amendment allowing grocers to charge 10 cents for paper bags to offset their higher cost.

"I took so much heat for supporting that idea among my own members," Fong said. "What they

Please see page 36

Trusted source of guidance during challenging times

"Ron Fong has been an influential and respected leader in the food industry, and it has been my privilege to serve on the board of directors during his tenure in various capacities, most notably as board chair during the pandemic, a challenging and transformative time from which I learned so much.



HeeSook Alden

"Over the years, Ron has been more than a colleague. He has been a good friend, mentor and trusted source of guidance. I am truly grateful for his friendship, leadership and the many lessons we have shared.

"I sincerely appreciate all that Ron has contributed to our industry and to those fortunate enough to work alongside him."

– HeeSook Alden, SVP, Marketing, Strategic Growth and Leadership Development, Certified Federal Credit Union

CONGRATULATIONS ON AN EXTRAORDINARY CAREER, RON!



It has been a privilege to work alongside you.

We are grateful for your partnership, your trust, and the opportunity to support the California Grocers Association throughout the years.

With appreciation and best wishes,



KAHN, SOARES & CONWAY, LLP

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HERE'S TO YOU,

RON.

For your leadership.

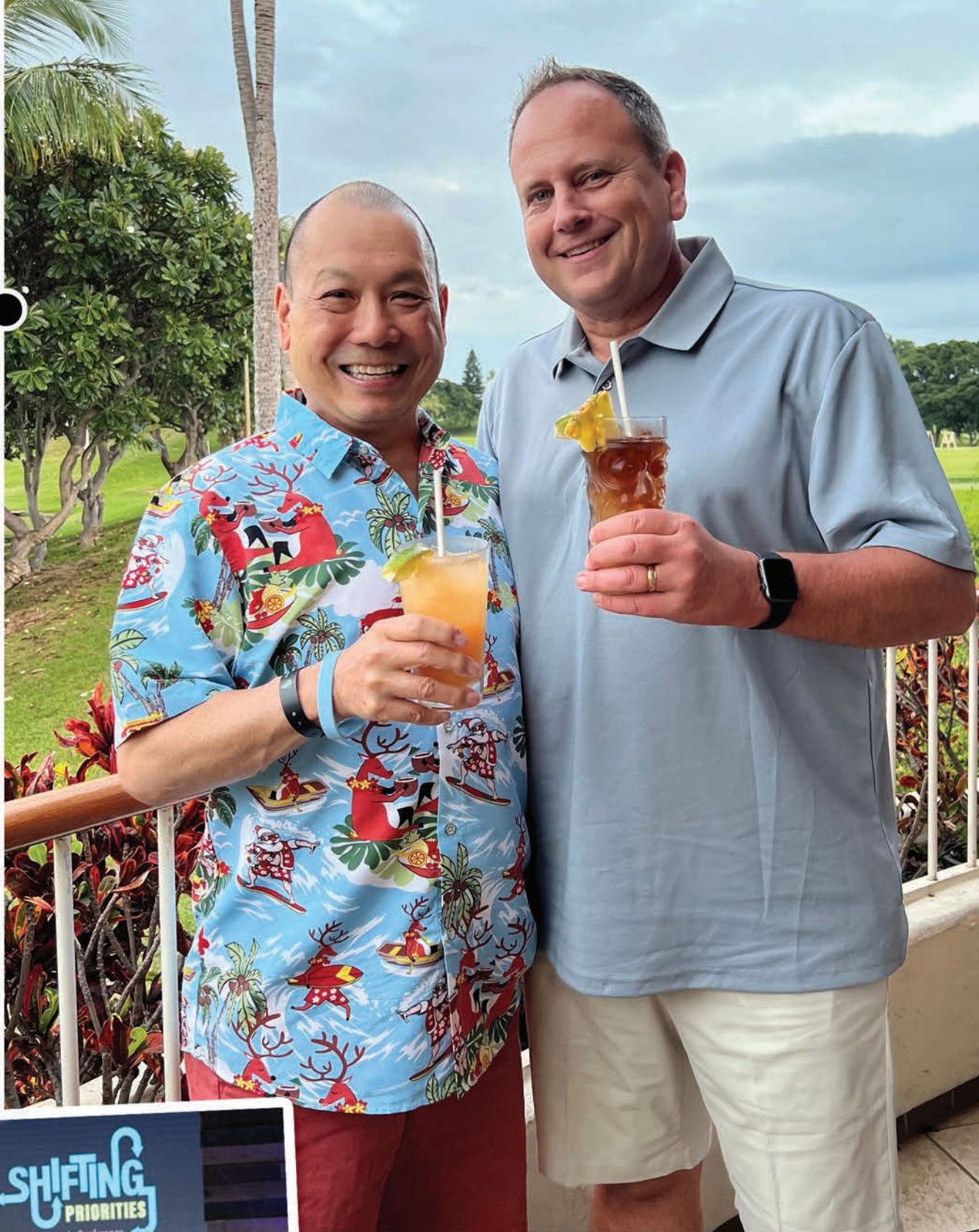
For your advocacy.

*And most of all,
for your friendship.*

For nearly two decades, you have been a tireless champion for California Grocers and a trusted friend and partner to North State Grocery.

Through boardrooms, conferences, store visits and more than a few good times along the way, we're grateful not only for your leadership, but for your friendship.

*Congratulations on an
incredible career and a
well-earned retirement*



Your friends at



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FOODS



Defines what it means to be servant leader

"Ron's remarkable legacy will be long lasting in the grocery industry and beyond for generations to come. His impact not only on the customers in our stores but the communities we are honored to serve is meaningful and powerful.

"He is a warrior leader, an insightful negotiator and a true friend ... He defines what it means to be a servant leader."

– Kendra Doyel, President, Ralphs Grocery Company



Kendra Doyel



Jim Van Gorkom, Renee Amen and Ron Fong



Judy and Jim Van Gorkom, Brianne Page and Ron Fong



Joe Perez and Ron Fong



Ron Fong and Wendy Coldesina



*Celebrating a
Remarkable Career*



*Honoring Your Years
of Leadership & Service*



*With gratitude and appreciation
from your partners at*



Congratulations on your retirement!



Thank you for a remarkable
career dedicated to
serving our industry.

Ron, you have been a tireless advocate
and trusted leader. Your steady presence
in Sacramento helped protect, strengthen,
and advance the grocery industry during
times of tremendous change.

The relationship we have built, the battles we
fought together, and the progress you've achieved
have made a meaningful difference for all of us.
Your dedication to the industry has been invaluable
during your tenure at CGA.

Thank you for your friendship, leadership,
and commitment to California's Grocers.

Wishing you happiness and success in your next chapter.

Stater Bros. Markets



STATER BROS.
markets



From page 32

did not understand was that bill was going to pass that year, with or without Ron's blessings. Had we not weighed in, that bill still would have passed, but our industry would have gotten nothing."

19 chairs, 19 relationships

Fong has worked alongside 19 CGA board chairs during his tenure, including Mary Kasper, the association's first woman chair. He resists ranking them

but allows that certain personalities stood out: Richie Morgan, who chaired the board when Fong was hired; HeeSook Alden, with whom he shared an Asian cultural understanding; Kendra Doyel; and Jonathan Mayes.

"With Jonathan Mayes, we have very similar backgrounds. His personality and

the way he approaches people, I learned a lot from watching him," Fong said. "But I had special relationships with all 19 of my chairs, every single one of them."

One chair changed the way Fong saw the world. In 2020, as protests over the murder of George Floyd broke windows at CGA's downtown Sacramento headquarters night after night, Fong went to then-Chairman Phil Miller of C&S Wholesale Grocers and admitted he was missing something.

"He explained the whole history of African-Americans being marginalized over the years – the pent-up frustrations – from his perspective," Fong said. "That was when I understood there is another opinion which matters. Had Phil not been in the chair's seat at the time, I would not have been able to have that conversation with him."

Fong took the lesson to the board, urging it to become intentional about reflecting the diversity of California's grocery community, from the Hispanic-dominated Southern California market to the state's growing Asian-format stores.

Today's executive board includes Chairman

“Forever grateful” for friendship, mentoring

"I had the pleasure of working with Ron on the CGAEB board for 16 years. Over those years I witnessed firsthand his tremendous leadership and passion for our industry ... most importantly, I am forever grateful for his friendship and mentorship."

– Brad Askeland, President and CEO, North State Grocery



Brad Askeland

Richard Wardwell of Superior Grocers, First Vice Chair Jonson Chen of 99 Ranch Market parent Tawa Supermarkets and Second Vice Chair Bertha Luna of Stater Bros. Markets.

"Why shouldn't our board reflect the grocery community? Those are CGA members," Fong said. "That is one of the proudest moments I have from a board standpoint, how accepting our board has been to embrace this change."



HeeSook Alden and Ron Fong

Congratulations Ron!

The **SAVE MART**
COMPANIES

From all of us at The Save Mart Companies, congratulations to Ron Fong on his retirement after a remarkable career dedicated to California's grocery industry and public advocacy.

We thank Ron for his many contributions and wish him, his wife Carol, and their family all the best in this well-deserved next chapter.



One-year goodbye and a lasting gift

Fong's departure has followed a careful script. He gave the board its required one-year notice last December. The membership learned early this year, and the broader industry is learning now, with *The Shelby Report* sharing the news first.

Before he goes, Fong is giving something back.

At this year's CGA Educational Foundation Hall of Achievement Dinner, his last, he established a legacy scholarship with an unusual structure: It supports a single student for all five years it typically takes to graduate. The recipient must be a first-generation college student attending Sacramento State, Fong's alma mater.

The inspiration is his mother, who came from Hong Kong at age 18, raised a family and returned to school at 40 to earn her degree from Sacramento State.

"English is her second language. I would wake up in the middle of the night and she would be doing her homework, translating words she didn't understand into a Chinese dictionary," Fong said. "It took her hours to read things that would take us 20 minutes. Her graduation was an inspiration to all of us."



CGA Independent Operators Symposium



Grocery advocate and superior negotiator

"Ron Fong has done a fantastic and exemplary job as president and CEO of CGA since he became our leader in 2008. He and his colleagues have lobbied tirelessly and successfully with tenacity, to regularly defeat proposed



legislation adverse to the grocers in California.

"Ron is a strong leader and grocer advocate with superior negotiating skills, who is respected by both his colleagues and opponents.

"Ron is a selfless, humble, intelligent and polished leader, who makes smart business decisions to protect all of us grocers. I send a big thank you to Ron for everything he has done for us and wish him the best in life."

— Bruce Brandlin, VP/Corporate Counsel, Northgate Gonzalez Market

CONGRATULATIONS

Ron Fong

ON YOUR RETIREMENT

On behalf of the Illuminators we congratulate you on your retirement and thank you for your outstanding leadership and years of dedicated service to the California Grocers Association and our industry.



WE APPRECIATE THE MANY YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP, DEDICATION, AND SUPPORT YOU HAVE SHOWN OUR INDUSTRY.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A LASTING IMPACT.



With gratitude,
THE ILLUMINATORS

Column

California Perspective
By Ronald K. Fong, President & CEO, California Grocers Association

Working to Be the Windshield...

There is an old poker adage that I recently read, though its origins likely lie in the downstate violence of ranches and towns. Sometimes you're the big, sometimes you're the windshield. Beyond the practical lesson it provides on the almost perpetual-like and fleeting nature of success, it serves as a caveat on maintaining humility in the wake of success. You never know when you may find yourself at the windshield blowing through those bags. It is a new certainty that at one point you will find yourself a bag on the wrong end of the adage. This wisdom is a useful way to keep things in perspective when maneuvering in our legislature.

As an industry, we found ourselves in the path of many windshields at the start of the year in California. For example, we started the year facing such legislation as predictive scheduling, a ban on the sale of baby balloons, and a measure that would have required products to be priced based on their perceived gender, to name a few. However, looking back at the end of the session, our government relations team managed to have the tables on those provisions situations and become the windshield, in large part, due to the quality of our relationships. Relationships are a key to long-term success in any business, but perhaps none more so than in the legislative arena. It's simply not enough to make a good case. One can make the greatest case for, or against, a certain piece of policy, but if the message isn't heard by the right people, you may as well have not made any case at all.

What really matters is who you make the case to. Sometimes it's made to an influential personal staffer. Sometimes it's made to an influential committee consultant. Sometimes it's made to a legislator who has a little more sway than they let on. And even if someone knows where the right person might be, it's relationships and reputation that get you in the door to see these influential people. It is impossible to know these things without having developed these relationships or building a team that has worked for years to build and power such relationships.

It is not for business groups such as ours to have everything fall in our favor. When you play the long game, there are bound to be setbacks. The key to long-term success is maintaining a good reputation, and better relationships. We may not always be the windshield, but know that because of the work we do behind the scenes, we will continue to be more windshield than bag.

The key to long-term success is maintaining a good reputation, and better relationships.

Column

California Perspective
By Ronald K. Fong, President & CEO, California Grocers Association

Democrats Gain Seats in California, But Will Pro-Business Sentiment Remain?

The much-anticipated blue wave that swept across the United States on election night resulted strong as it washed over California. Democrats have scored unprecedented victories at every level of government—sweeping every statewide office, reducing the number of Congressional Republicans in levels not seen in generations, and bolstering supermajorities in both houses of the state legislature. And there's little reason to think that Republicans will be gaining back any significant ground in the next election as Democrats historically do better in presidential election years than they do in mid-term elections. As the new legislative session begins in Sacramento, the question is: How bad will the new political climate be for grocers (and the business community as a whole) in California?

While it's impossible to predict anything political with certainty, there is some reason to believe that it won't be as bad as some people might think. The first glimmer of hope comes from the State Senate. For years, it was the State Assembly that was considered the easier place to get legislation that was deemed bad for business. With 60 Democrats in the lower house, this will not be the case in the new legislature. Finding 20 Democrats. Assemblymembers to vote against legislation from members of their own party will be a daunting, if not nearly impossible, task. The dynamic in the Senate will be a bit different. Although Senate Democrats will have 20 members in the 80-member house, a number of these Democrats are more business-friendly moderates who have replaced more liberal members of their party. These moderates will have the ability to coordinate correctly to improve "business-friendly" amendments to legislation that is overly burdensome to business and if such amendments to these types of bills are not taken, even stop bills from passing altogether.

Whether or not this will happen remains to be seen. It will take some organization and leadership from moderate Senate Democrats to do this and there has been no indication that such leadership exists there yet.

The second glimmer of hope, believe it or not, is incoming governor Gavin Newsom. Though he has a national profile of being an extremely liberal, progressive politician from San Francisco, it is worth noting that he is a business owner who began his political career as a well-known pro-business moderate.

This point is sometimes lost on people outside of California, where it is not uncommon for a Democrat (or Republican for that matter) to be extremely progressive on social issues and more moderate and pragmatic on issues affecting business. Newsom will no doubt bring his experience as a retailer and manufacturer to Sacramento—and that experience will (hopefully) inform some of the decisions he makes on the legislation that is sent down his legislative pipeline.

This is all conjecture, though. Nothing in life, or politics, is guaranteed. A lot can happen between now and the end of the first year of the legislative session in January.

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"Ron always had such class and was always open to listen to any of our concerns or issues. We will surely miss his leadership and friendship"

Steve Weakley
— Steve Weakley, President, CEO, Certified Federal Credit Union

Ron Fong's "California Perspective" column from The Shelby Report of The West in December 2016 (far left) and January 2019

Congratulations

ON YOUR RETIREMENT

RON FONG

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to the grocery industry and to the California grocery community. Your leadership has helped strengthened our industry and built meaningful connections among retailers, suppliers, and partners across the state. We are grateful for the impact you have made and the legacy you leave behind. Wish you all the best in this exciting new chapter.

May your retirement be filled with happiness, health and wonderful adventures!

With our deepest appreciation,

99 RANCH MARKET

Celebrating a Legacy of Leadership

Ron Fong has spent nearly two decades as the voice of California's grocery industry, fighting for retailers and vendors alike in the halls of the state legislature.

As he retires from the California Grocers Association, the González Family and the entire Northgate González Market team want to say: thank you, Ron. Your leadership shaped our industry, and your friendship means more than words can capture.

Wishing you health, happiness, and adventure ahead.

The González Family, Northgate González Market



Honoring Ron Fong *Celebrating a Remarkable* *Career and Lasting Legacy*

As Ron Fong retires from the California Grocers Association, we extend our sincere gratitude for his many years of exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication to California's grocery industry.

Thank you, Ron, for your leadership, advocacy, and steadfast commitment to our industry.
Wishing you a happy, healthy, and well-deserved retirement.

Congratulations on an extraordinary career.

With gratitude and appreciation,

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'You're one of us': Fong on friendship with Shelby exec

Before a single question was asked in his retirement interview, Ron Fong wanted something on the record.

"You were one of my first friends when I came into the CGA world 19 years ago," Fong told his interviewer, *The Shelby Report's* Bob Reeves. "I remember distinctly meeting you, and not knowing who you were, I thought, 'Do I trust this person? What's *The Shelby Report*?' None of the paranoia came through. You're just a genuine person that writes in the right way, and I really appreciate your friendship, Bob."

For Fong, the friendship reflects something larger about how trust is earned in the industry he has represented for nearly two decades.

"In journalism, the reporters and writers that you want to talk to are people that are writing the article for the right reason. They want to get the news out, not to opine on it, not to judge," he said. "You're not judgmental on anything. It is what it is, the facts are the facts. And you

show up for all of our events, so people just naturally trust you because you're one of us."



Ron Fong and Bob Reeves



Ron Fong and Lori Brown

Thank You, Ron

For more than two decades, you have helped strengthen California's grocery industry through advocacy, partnership, and service.

Congratulations on an extraordinary career and well-earned retirement.

THE **Raley's** COMPANIES

HONORING A TRUE CHAMPION
OF CALIFORNIA'S GROCERY INDUSTRY.

Happy Retirement, Ron Fong

For Albertsons Companies, Ron's partnership was pivotal. On behalf of our entire store family across Northern and Southern California, thank you, Ron, for your unwavering partnership, leadership, and service to our industry. We wish you a happy, restful, and well-deserved retirement!



CONGRATULATIONS RON FONG

*Celebrating a Remarkable Career
of Leadership & Service*

Superior Grocers congratulates Ron Fong on his well-deserved retirement! Thank you for your years of leadership, dedication, and commitment to California's grocery industry.

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*With appreciation from all of us
at Superior Grocers*

