WHO’S GOING TO SPOT THE COMET HURTLING TOWARD YOU...

...AND DEFLECT IT?
The Wisconsin Restaurant Association is the one industry trade association in Wisconsin that you can count on to identify and address all kinds of threats to your business. Other groups asking for your membership commitment may focus on just alcohol issues, just tax issues or just local issues. But, WRA has the resources, reach and know-how to identify and address problems on the horizon for all aspects of your business.

Here are some examples:

2001: State of Wisconsin claims that all unredeemed gift certificates and gift cards are “unclaimed property” and tells retail businesses to turn over the proceeds of unused gift obligations to the state treasurer. WRA pushes through legislation clarifying that unused gift cards are not “unclaimed property.”

2005: WRA gets a new state law passed that nullifies Madison’s minimum wage and prevents all local governments from setting their own minimum wages.

2005 & 2006: An executive order raises Wisconsin’s minimum wage, but WRA blocks a commensurate increase in the server wage. In fact, there has not been a significant increase in the server wage since 1981. WRA knows that wage increases are needed more in the back of the house. Forcing higher wages in the front of the house is counterproductive.

2006: WRA champions a state law preventing obesity-related lawsuits against restaurants.

2008: Milwaukee voters approve a ballot initiative requiring a paid sick leave benefit for all employees. WRA joins a business-sector lawsuit against the City of Milwaukee and delays implementation of the sick leave ordinance until 2011.
2009: A bill is introduced by Senate Majority Leader to create automatic annual minimum wage hikes and allow local minimum wage ordinances. WRA rallies members and gets the measure pulled from the state budget, then defeats the bill in the Assembly Labor Committee.

2010: City of Superior debates a plan to ban toys and other prizes in kids’ meals offered by restaurants. WRA staff and members serve up the facts to Council members, and defeat the proposal.

2011: WRA helps to pass a state ban on local regulation of sick leave benefits and Family and Medical Leave, killing the Milwaukee sick leave mandate.

2013: New York City bans soft drinks larger than 16 ounces. The City of Madison discusses similar legislation. WRA gets a state law passed preventing local governments from regulating serving sizes, nutritional values, nutritional labeling or types of foods that may be served in restaurants.

2014: Milwaukee Common Council president and Health Department announce the development of a restaurant grading system that would require placards with letter grades on restaurants’ front doors. WRA rallies members in Milwaukee to attend meetings and contact alders. WRA remains engaged in this battle and is currently fighting to pre-empt letter grading at the local level.

2015: A secret budget provision would have eliminated the liquor licenses of hundreds of restaurant operators around the state, putting many of them out of business without compensation. WRA uncovers this secret maneuver and convinces Governor Walker to veto the provision from the budget bill.

2016: There is a wave of major cities around the nation banning plastic bags, polystyrene, coated papers and other specific types of containers used by restaurants. WRA and other business-sector groups band together and pass a law preventing local governments from banning or taxing containers, bags, bottles or cans used by retail businesses.

2017: WRA succeeds in partially repealing the onerous personal property tax on restaurant equipment that unfairly singled out restaurants—this will mean reduced taxes for some restaurant businesses.

2018: WRA pushes to pass the Employment Law Standardization Act that pre-empts municipalities from enacting local employment laws such as “Fair Scheduling” or mandating specific employment benefits—this ensures that employment laws are set at the state level allowing businesses to develop scheduling and benefit packages that work best for their employees.
Further accomplishments in the 2017-2018 Session:

- Strengthened unemployment insurance laws to reduce fraud
- Prevented municipalities from using special restaurant financing practices as a way to increase property tax collections
- September 1st school-starting date protected

If you want to support the one trade association that truly “has your back” in all aspects of your business, then you should belong to the Wisconsin Restaurant Association.

Consider, for a moment, what any one of these law changes would cost your business:

- A local minimum wage hike of $5 per hour?
- Loss of your alcohol license?
- Mandatory paid sick leave for all employees?
- Loss of the “tip credit” that allows a “server wage?”
- A ban or a tax on take-out containers?
- Confiscation of profits from unredeemed gift cards?

As you can see, WRA’s vigilance has already saved your business plenty. Make sure WRA remains strong and continues looking out for your business.

WRA has your back.