

UP CLOSE: ART JAEGER

A former executive vice president for Capitol Records, Art Jaeger built three self-service laundries and then turned around and sold them all. Now, he's back in business, with a new 5,400-square-foot showplace laundry in Santa Clarita, Calif.



How did you get involved in the coin laundry industry?

After leaving Capitol Records, I tried my hand at a few Internet startups that were music-related. However, to be honest, they all had bad business plans. But at least that got me used to doing startup, entrepreneurial work.

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BACK TO HIS ROOTS

Southern California Store Owner Returns to the Self-Service, Coin-Operated Business Environment He Grew Up In

by Sabrina Nucciarone

When Spanish rancheros of California were divided, bought and settled by East Coast immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it *was* the Wild West. Cattle ranches stretched from the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains to the bluffs above the Pacific Ocean. The expanse of land created by the mountain barrier from the sea is what modern weathercasters term the Los Angeles Basin.

The German immigrants settled and named their little portion of the basin *Annaheim* and began their community in humble fashion with vineyards grown with grape seeds brought from the motherland. Wine production gave way to orange groves and a variety of crops. Strawberries, green beans

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VANDALISM MAY FORCE CALIFORNIA APARTMENTS TO CANCEL LAUNDRY SERVICE

In the world of property management, revenues from apartment complex laundry machines don't net much profit. And for some apartment owners and managers in Arcata, Calif., that profit margin has become even smaller—in fact, in some cases it has turned into a negative cash flow.

A handful of laundry rooms at local apartment complexes have been hit by thieves looking to make a few bucks from the quarters in the washers and dryers, according to a report in the *Eureka Reporter*. The tops of several machines recently were ripped off at

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After attempting those Internet startups, I was offered a fairly substantial amount of money to begin a new record label, but I saw that the record business was going downhill. I felt that, if this person gave me these millions of dollars to work with, he was going to end up having nothing. The Internet and downloading of music has changed the entire economic model of that industry, which is still suffering from those changes.

Armed with the knowledge I had acquired from all of my various professional experiences over the years, I had developed a list of criteria that I was looking for in a business. And, after doing my research, the coin laundry industry was the one business that most closely matched the items on my list.

What types of requirements were on your list?

One requirement was that it had to be something I could finance myself without a partner. Eventually, I got financing, but I didn't want to have

to deal with venture capitalists and equity partners and people like that.

Another item on the list was that it did not require me to be there all of the time. I wanted the flexibility to make my own hours.

A third item was that there would be a readily accessible exit strategy without having to fall back onto a "fire sale" kind of mentality.

Also, it had to be a fairly flat organization that I could be able to run myself.

Over time, I've gone through all of these items, including selling stores. And everything that I thought came true. When I decided that I wanted to sell certain stores, I was able to do it in three months at a very strong price.

When I originally got into it, it was not my intention to build and sell. But I look at these things very unemotionally. These are investments to me, and there was a moment in time when I looked at all of the statistics regarding these stores and where the prices were at that moment in time, and I had two fears. I had fear

that the interest rates were going to go higher, and I had fear that the utility costs were going to keep going higher.

Both of those things would reduce the total value of a store. At that same moment in time, I was getting very strong offers. I believe that you never go broke by making money. There are a lot of people who won't pull the trigger on a deal, but I've never been scared to leave a couple of cents on the table.

So you sold your first three laundries.

I sold all three stores, and I made a lot of money on them. Having done so, I then re-visited all of my original thoughts about owning my own business. I looked at a number of different businesses again. And, again, I ended up with another coin laundry. It simply met my needs. Despite looking at all of these other type of businesses and seriously thinking about them, I still returned to the fact that the coin laundry business is the best one for me.

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The only thing I did differently this time around is that I decided I wanted to change my business model slightly. And that's what I did with this new store.

Tell about that change.

The biggest thing I noticed was that I needed to have protection against future price increases. I wanted to be in a position where I had higher margins. And I definitely wanted to be in a business where I felt I could build a large drop-off and commercial laundry segment as well.

My first three laundries were all in what I call 70/70 markets—70 percent Hispanic and 70 percent renters. I wanted to find a demographic that still had a core Latino base, but that also had more middle- and upper-income people that would use my drop-off service. I also wanted to find an area where I felt I could build a strong commercial business.

With my first three locations, I had a couple of different problems. One was that because the household income levels were a little low, the customers displayed some price-

sensitivity. Even if I clearly had the best, cleanest laundry with the best machines, if somebody came in and was charging 75 cents on their toploaders, the customers would go there.

It didn't matter that the other laundry owner may be losing money, he's still charging 75 cents—and that made it very hard to raise prices. As a result, I was unable to raise my vend prices to where I felt they needed to be for me to achieve a fair return on investment. I needed to find a different location. I needed to get out of that situation.

What are some of the top issues facing laundry operators in your area?

Generally speaking, the vend prices are too low out here. It's the same old story: Back East, the vend prices are higher, but the turns are lower. Here, what we lose in pricing, we "make up in volume."

Of course, that's not exactly true, because our margins are lower. We still have our gas and water prices, which are very expensive. We might be doing more business, so

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we end up with the same total top line. But our bottom line is less and our ROI is less than they have in the East.

For example, let's say you get to \$10 in the East by two turns, and you get to \$10 in the West by three and a half turns. In the East, you're doing two times water and two times gas. In the West, you're doing three and a half times water and gas.

The second big problem, aside from vend pricing, are dry times. Nowhere do I think there as many store owners still at 25 cents for 15 minutes. At my other three stores, I was monitoring my competition as gas prices went up, and not one of them moved off of 15 minutes for 25 cents—even as gas prices doubled and tripled. You just can't compete with that type of mentality. I'd rather sell, get out and make money—and go somewhere else.

Are you the vend price leader in your market now?

Yes, I am.

Any other issues you're dealing with in your market?

Where I am located, the price of water is very steep and the impact fees are getting up there, too. Those have to be

calculated into your budget. In fact, I hear a lot of stories about people who have all of a sudden gotten hit with a very large impact fee, and they didn't know where that money was going to come from.

What industry trends are you noticing in your area?

What comes to mind immediately are larger stores and larger machines, along with less toploaders. As an owner, one would prefer to have no toploaders at all. But most store owners usually end up with somewhere between six and 10, as a token effort. Nobody really needs them, but there are customers who cling to the notion of the toploader.

In fact, some people come in and tell me that my laundry, which is a card-operated store, is too modern. The first couple of weeks I was open, I had one person start screaming at me as they walked out—and what they're really screaming out is that another element of their lives has past them by.

They probably don't understand the Internet. And while they're yelling at me, what they're really saying is: "I'm trying to stay in the '50s and now I don't even understand how to use my laundromat anymore."

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On the other hand, I can't even begin to tell you how many people have walked in and said, "I haven't been in a laundromat in 20 years. This is unbelievable." They're just amazed at the machines, the technology and the whole atmosphere. I built my store with the middle-income consumer in mind.

For instance, my drop-off area has a granite countertop. I put in a POS system. I installed a weigh station. I have a 40-foot-long section of storage racks and shelving, and laundry products are sold behind the counter. Customers receive a printed receipt with their name on it, along with the time the items were dropped off, a pickup date and any special instructions.

I want to have a drycleaner's mentality for my drop-off laundry. As a result, I spent an extra \$500 on my granite countertop. To me, that's one of the best investments I could make, because when customers come in and put their clothes down or sign a receipt, they are subconsciously getting a feeling that their clothes are in good hands.

I've been to other stores that do drop-off laundry, and some just take a small section of a folding table and put a scale on it, while the clothes are thrown in the back room next to the boilers.

Over the years, have you developed a business philosophy that you use in your laundries?

I do. I want to be the number-one store in my market. Everything I do—from picking the location to determining the size to evaluating the trade area—is to prepare me to go in there and dominate the marketplace.

After that, everything else follows. Because now I'm trying to do everything first class, from the décor to the machines to my employee training and how my attendants treat the customers.

I recently bought a book called "Exceeding Customer Expectations." And I'm actually going to have a sign printed and placed inside my attendants' area; it's going to read: "Our Goal: Exceeding Customer Expectations."

What are your thoughts on attendants and their training?

I don't think enough laundry owners consider their attendants to be more than janitors. I consider mine to be customer service representatives, and their job is to retain my customers, as well as to find me new ones. If they're not doing that, they're not doing their job. That's very important to me.

In fact, I tell each of my attendants that, if they bring in one new customer a week, together they will have brought in 28 new customers by the end of the month.

Whenever we see a customer walk into the laundry looking quizzical, I get an attendant to go right over. We try to make the card system training experience a selling experience as well. This is an opportunity to tell the customer about the promotions we're running, about how the card can benefit them and so on.

Constantly, I get customers saying, "Boy, I'm really glad I'm here. Not only is this the cleanest laundry with the nicest people, but if there is ever a problem, there's always somebody here to help me with it."

Customers encounter all kinds of crazy problems, and it's great to have somebody who can go over to them and help them solve it right away.

What are your thoughts on marketing and advertising?

I'm a major marketer. And I received a very pleasant surprise after I opened this new location in Santa Clarita.

As it turns out, Santa Clarita views itself as very much its own city—and very independent of the surrounding areas. Because of this mentality, there are several publications and other media outlets available to me just in this region and just targeted to this area.

In the past, one of my problems with my stores in other areas was, because they were located in large sections of Los Angeles, there were only a couple of advertising vehicles I could utilize to get distribution in the zones that I wanted. Otherwise, I was paying for a lot of areas I didn't need.

After all, at the end of the day, coin laundries are still



proximity businesses. People aren't necessarily going to bypass eight other laundries to come to yours. You hope they do, but you can't count on it.

Santa Clarita has its own newspapers and its own magazines. I was able to run ads in several different publications. For my grand opening campaign, I received 600,000 impressions in the first five weeks, using a variety of media. Since then, I have retained a budget that allows me to get between 70,000 and 80,000 impression a month. That's been very useful for building up the awareness of my laundry.

I also have exterior banners, which are fantastic. And I've got in-store signage. Regarding promotions, I try to do something different every month to excite my customers. I've got a regular marketing campaign, and I spend between \$800 and \$1,000 a month on it.

When self-service laundries fail, what is the most common reason?

Failures are due to owner neglect and indifference. I've watched some of these owners, and they don't have a clue. By contrast, I have seen owners who pay attention to their stores, who care about them, who understand them, who think about them—and they're all huge successes.

A coin laundry is a business. It requires attention like any other business.

What's the biggest mistake you've ever made in this business?

The biggest mistake was building my second store. The truth of the matter is that store did not allow me to maintain the positioning and the standard that I really wanted.

As I mentioned, I want to be able to dominate a market. Building a great store—a very special store—also forms somewhat of a barrier to entry for other would-be laundry owners. When potential entrepreneurs are looking at your neighborhood and thinking about coming in, if they see your store and the kind of investment it takes to build these days, they may say to themselves: "Do I really want to do this?"

Unfortunately, my second store, which was my smallest store at only 2,900 square feet, didn't allow me to be what I wanted to be. Each time I went into that store, I felt claustrophobic. The aisles were too tight. There wasn't enough room for amenities. That was my biggest mistake. I didn't really like that store.

However, I was green at the time. My concept wasn't fully actualized. I virtually signed the leases to my first and second stores within four months of each other.

Now, looking back on it, I feel that my biggest mistake was building that second store because it really wasn't in tune with everything else that I was doing. Also, keeping with that, when it came to sell, it was the most difficult store to sell.

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What are your business goals for the remainder of 2007?

The rest of 2007 will be devoted to making my new store a success. And you have to run through a whole cycle, a full year, before you really know something about your business. Each day, each week and each month is different than what you experienced before.

Until then, you don't have anything to compare it with. You don't know what the total customer patterns are in your area. You know what your demographics are, but how far does it drop off over the summer? How great does it recover when schools start up again? What happens on the holidays? What happens during vacation periods? Even though you go in with certain expectations, are they going to come true?

So this year is devoted to making my new store a success. If it turns out to be the store that I'm hoping it will be, I'm going to look for a similar location and a similar opportunity. Those aren't easy to find. You have to have your eyes open all the time. And, at the end of the day, it's all a risk.

What advice would you give to a new laundry owner just getting into this business?

At the last Clean Show in 2005, I met a young man from Florida who wanted to get into this business. He was there doing his due diligence in 2005 the same way I was doing my due diligence in 2003.

I was really impressed with his enthusiasm and energy at the time. He kept in touch with me, and about a year or so after Clean '05, he bought his first laundry.

He decided to buy an existing store and has given me regular updates on his progress. He has doubled wash-dry-fold sales. He's up 30 percent on the self-service end. He's paying attention to his customers. He's doing fantastic.

I think the answer to that question is right there—enthusiasm and energy. He is already a success and loving every second of it. He left a career in banking to do this. And he has the two attributes—enthusiasm and energy.

I get very upset when I see people trying to promote our industry by telling to people how little you have to put into it. I feel that is sending people the wrong signals. It's also going to attract the wrong type of owners. There is no business that you can run that doesn't require you to have to put some work and effort into it.

Does this business offer you flexibility that you don't have in the corporate world? Absolutely. But when you're heading out at 10 at night to fix a problem, which you will be doing, tell yourself this: "At least I'm doing this for myself." All those years that I spent heading out at 10 at night flying somewhere, I was doing it for somebody else.

With a coin laundry, you have a lot more control over your time. You end up spending less time than you would at a full-time corporate job. But if you don't spend adequate time and energy on your laundry business, you're not going to be successful.

In your marketplace, is the coin laundry business still a good business to get into?

You would probably call it more of a mature market. However, I think part of that maturity is because of the number of stores there are. There are a lot of older stores that require replacement, and replacing those stores is a key element right now.

I think you have to do your research and be very careful what you get into. But, if you pay attention to what you're doing, I still feel this can be a good opportunity.

If you're willy-nilly about this and don't do your homework, you could end up with a big problem.

If you don't spend adequate time and energy on your laundry business, you're not going to be successful.

What did you take away from Clean '07 in Las Vegas?

I've already put two things into practice that I saw at this year's Clean Show. For starters, I am now opening my store an hour later in the summer. I had spoken with several people at the show in regard to business hours, and they pointed out that, as daylight gets longer and people spend more time outside, they want to come in a little later in the day. I also talked to my attendants about this, and they agreed that we should be open an hour longer, moving the last wash to 10 at night. So I have done that and received positive feedback already.

The second thing was that I was totally knocked out by Minnesota store owner Jeff Gardner and his wash-dry-fold presentation. As soon as I got home, I bought shrink wrap from Sam's Club and made photocopies of his demonstration for all of my attendants. We've instituted shrink-wrapping all of the clothes as per Jeff's demonstration, and the initial reaction we have gotten from our customers so far has been over the moon.

We have adopted his philosophy of making our drop-off service as close to retail as possible. Jeff knocked us out with his presentation.

And I made some other great contacts as well. For me, it was a very productive show.



and celery thrived in the year-round moderate temperatures, and dairy farms dotted the landscape from the mountains to the sea.

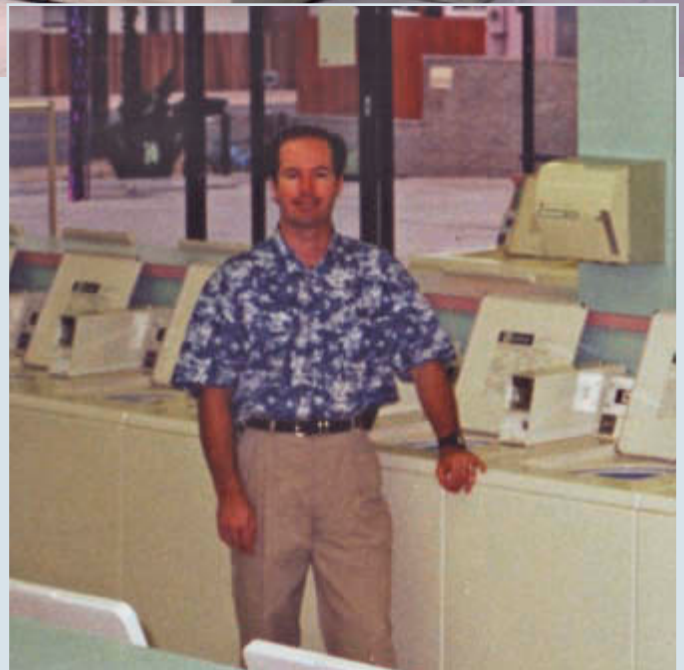
Present-day Anaheim is the largest city in Orange County in population and area. Many know the city as the home of Disneyland. Since 1955, the presence of Disneyland created an economic boon to the once-sleepy Anaheim community. No one, except for perhaps Walt Disney himself, may have predicted what the presence of Disneyland would do to the little burg of Anaheim, let alone for the rest of Orange County.

Between the lure of the mild climate and the passage of time, farmlands dwindled. Giving way to the development of growing communities, the now culturally diverse population of Anaheim has increased drastically since the 1960s.

According to city records available on the City of Anaheim Web site, in 1950, there were an estimated 14,556 residents. In 1960, just five years after the opening of Disneyland, the population increased to 104,184. For 2006, the estimate is 342,410 and still climbing. Any way you look at it, as a task on anyone's "to-do" list in the civilized world, it is a lot of laundry.

Located in what has become a diverse center of residential, recreational and cultural influences, Phil Ces and his 2,400-square-foot Sea Breeze Laundromat sit poised between understanding the past and preparing for the future.

In hindsight, the laundromats of the past are an entity that may well have been entirely taken for granted. Automobiles made it possible for people to be on the move. Many newcomers to the Anaheim area lived in apartment buildings or motels and did not have their own laundry facilities.



Jumping ahead a few decades, modern apartment complexes are continually raising the stakes on inclusive amenities, with some developments rivaling some of the finest hotels in the world. Some have it all—a concierge, pools, fitness rooms, underground parking and laundry facilities with state-of-the-art equipment.

"The coin-operated laundry business is very competitive now," Ces explained. "It is a full-fledged business. We are fully attended."

And his initial business decision to not offer a drop-off laundry service is one that he is currently revisiting. Understanding that drop-off service is one of the big discussions in the industry at the moment—and one of the bright spots on many markets—it is one of many options Ces is considering for the future.

"I like the idea, but it is a whole different business model," Ces said.

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With more expectations involved from a drop-off customer's standpoint, there are greater responsibilities as an owner. Ces realizes that a drop-off laundry service may be potentially profitable in its conception, but he knows that self-serve is the heart of his customer base.

Advertising in the *Pennysaver* magazine, a popular local, weekly tabloid-style circular, Ces said that between the ads he places and word-of-mouth, he has managed to capture the attention of the customers in the area.

Also, to increase business on traditionally slow Wednesdays and Thursdays, he has dropped the cost of a topload wash from \$1.25 to just \$1. What's more, twice a year for a two-week time period, Ces runs a promotion where customers receive free soap for their laundry.

The customers at Sea Breeze Laundromat are not the only ones who are able to take advantage of savings.

Believing that his business is the only coin-operated laundry facility to take advantage of it, at least in Anaheim, Ces decided that the California sunshine (and a few well-placed palm trees) could help him save by using solar power. Though the system is not used to heat the water, it does generate the electricity to power the appliances.

The 15-kilowatt solar electric-generating system that was specifically designed for the roof of Sea Breeze Laundry in Anaheim by SolSource Energy, an authorized dealer of Kyocera Solar, Inc., powers up about half of the washing machines in the store. This move has effectively contributed to reducing about 40 percent of the total electrical energy needs of Ces' Anaheim location.

"The customers don't really see it," Ces said. But he sees the difference in his utility costs.

When the city of Anaheim offered the program, which included rebates and tax credits, "I wanted to take advantage of it," Ces said.

Within its equipment mix, Sea Breeze still features 40 toploading washers to go along with 17 stack dryers. However, additional larger, 35-pound-capacity frontload washers ensure customers that multiple loads can be done simultaneously. In fact, Ces has noticed that more and more large families are coming in to do their laundry.

"Even if they have a washer and a dryer at home, it just doesn't cut it to do one load at a time," the laundry owner observed.

Ces also operates a second Sea Breeze location in Orange, just a few miles away. But one could say the two locations are worlds apart.

Orange is a compact residential community that has easy freeway access to everywhere else in southern California. Orange boasts an upscale shopping mall, county court buildings and a private university. Ces makes note of the difference in clientele between the two stores.

The Sea Breeze in Orange has the same type of equipment for multiple loads, but instead the location attracts mostly college students from nearby Chapman University. They bring their books and wireless laptops along with their laundry. Ces said a CU student study group even featured the Sea Breeze in a film project.

As a youth, Ces helped his parents with their owner-operated self-serve car washes in and around greater Long Beach, Calif., but his professional background after his undergraduate education was in engineering, and he went to work for Ford Aerospace. Later furthering his education, Ces attended business school at the Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA. With that education, Ces turned his attention to the high profile industry of southern California real estate development and finance. Then, about 12 years ago, Ces made the decision to return to what he knew best.

Having literally grown up in the self-serve, coin-operated business environment, Ces also took positive note of what he learned in his various past professions and returned to his roots in the mid-1990s. Ces bought a lot in Anaheim and began with a car wash. Given the demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods, he knew it would be a good location for a laundromat as well. He then used the

remaining portion of the parcel to build a combined-use structure containing a convenience store, which is leased out—and to create Sea Breeze Laundromat. In addition, the building has a self-contained parking lot for 18 vehicles.

Ces' background in engineering may explain the turn toward using solar energy for electrical power at Sea Breeze in Anaheim. His experience in high profile southern California real estate development industry may explain his current personal interest in being "a one-man show." However, it is his return to the family business of self-serve, coin-operated conveniences that may strike a more emotional chord than an academic one.

"Like car washes, the laundromat is really a piece of Americana, something you will not find anywhere else," he marveled. "If you go to Europe, you'll find a little bitty hole in the wall. Here, laundries are big. It's truly American."

Sabrina Nucciarone is a freelance writer based in Kiel, Wis.



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three separate apartment complexes in Arcata, destroying the machines and costing property owners thousands of dollars to replace them.

Stephanie Bode, owner of Bode Property Management in Eureka, Calif., said two dryers at an apartment complex her company manages were rendered useless after the tops were taken off—an act that costs much more to fix than the quarters stowed inside.

“By the time it’s all said and done, you break even on them but you’re not going to get rich off them,” Bode said.

Humboldt Property Management senior manager Alan Gunn, whose business had three dryers completely removed from an apartment complex in Arcata and who said the quarters are emptied constantly, agreed and added that the laundry rooms are for the convenience of the tenants.

“You only get maybe \$20 per machine,” he said. “It’s not like there’s 100 bucks of coins in there. It’s not a big money maker.” Gunn said he would have rather cut the person taking the quarters a check for the amount of the quarters and saved the money he spent buying new

machines, which cost him more than \$1,500. Police recovered the tops of the machines taken from the apartments in Eureka, but the rest of the dryers are still missing.

Other apartment owners and property management companies around the county experienced similar problems, including Kramer Properties Inc. in Fairhaven, which was forced to re-key every machine and lock the laundry rooms at their apartment complexes.

“Some of the (tenants) don’t have cars so it’s nice that they have the laundries on the premises,” said KPI property manager Lorene Luster. “I think they feel pretty safe because they can put their clothes in there and go back to their apartment knowing the laundry room is locked.”

But despite the locks, vandals continue to enter the laundry rooms and take quarters. Last month some of KPI’s washers and dryers were destroyed, totaling \$3,600 in damages. KPI is looking at their options: either taking measures to counteract the break-ins or completely closing the laundry rooms.

Gunn has been forced to close one of his laundry rooms temporarily and said he will close others if the vandalism continues. Bode said she will also take action if more machines are damaged.

“The unfortunate part is that eventually it’s going to be too much for any property management company to absorb and they’ll have to get rid of the laundry machines,” Bode said. “You just can’t replace an \$800 washer every month. At some point it just becomes too much of a hassle.”

REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY BILL TO INCREASE TRANSPARENCY, PROMOTE JOB CREATION IN TEXAS

Texas Gov. Rick Perry recently signed House Bill 3430, which will increase transparency in government and promote job creation within the small-business community in the state.

Under HB 3430, state agencies will be required to more carefully review the economic effect of rules that may adversely impact small businesses, and those agencies would be required to consider less burdensome alternatives of achieving a rule’s purpose.

Today, small businesses with less than 20 employees spend \$7,647 each year per employee to comply with federal regulations compared with the \$5,282 spent by firms with 500 or more employees, according to the U.S.

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Sens. Eddie Lucio and Leticia Van de Putte and Reps. Gary Elkins and Mark Strama are the original co-sponsors of this legislation.

PWS READIES FOR ANNUAL FALL SHOWS

PWS-The Laundry Company will hold its annual series of fall shows with a Las Vegas theme this year.

The first shows will be Sept. 8 in San Francisco (650-871-0300) and Albuquerque, N.M. (505-883-0118). Then, on Sept. 15, there will be another show in Los Angeles (323-721-8832). And, lastly, a show in Phoenix (888-214-3200) will take place on Oct. 6. Each event will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

In addition to featuring the best pricing and financing on all Speed Queen commercial laundry equipment and parts, many of the industry's most popular vendors will be on hand to share their latest products and technology.

PWS Service School Classes will be held at the San Francisco and Los Angeles events. And, as a special attraction this year, there will be presentations by the Coin Laundry Association on ways to increase profits at the San Francisco, Los Angeles and Phoenix shows.

As always, PWS will provide a free buffet luncheon and many other special events throughout the day.

For additional information on PWS The Laundry Company and its entire scope of services, or to be added to the mailing list to be informed of special offers, opportunities, classes, seminars and shows throughout the year, call (877) 455-2863.

CALIFORNIA MERGES HEALTH-CARE BILLS

The recent merging of two major health-care bills into one piece of legislation, which was announced by their authors—Senate President Don Perata and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez—only increases the fears of small-business owners that they, more than ever, are dead center in the crosshairs of its open-ended financing, according to the National Federation of Independent Business.

“Curing the deaf ears lawmakers have turned toward the pleas of small-business owners would be the very best start in dealing with the health-care crisis in California,” said John Kabateck, executive director for the National Federation of Independent Business/California. “The legislature’s approach to health-care reform is putting the cart before the horse by mandating unaffordable health coverage.”

The legislation, Assembly Bill 8, calls on businesses to fork over a new payroll tax of 7.5 percent, the same as a 50 percent increase in Social Security taxes. There are no cost containment or control measures, no small-business exemptions, and nothing to assist employers with the cost of health-insurance premiums.

The key to putting a dent in the number of medically uninsured, according to Kabateck, is to get a handle on costs. Legislators, on the other hand, are only concerned with coverage.

Nationally, less than half of small-business owners can afford health care for themselves or their employees, compared with 99 percent of big businesses that provide medical coverage.

CALIFORNIA ACCESS LAWYER ORDERED TO PAY UP

San Diego attorney Theodore Pinnock, who has made his living—and angered hundreds of business owners—by alleging violations of access laws for the disabled, has been ordered to pay more than \$15,000 in fees and take legal ethics training, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

The order was issued by U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Miller, who said Pinnock alleged violations of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act at a San Diego convenience store even though the store has been closed for more than two years.

Miller said Pinnock violated federal court rules by making allegations in his lawsuit without a “reasonable and competent inquiry.”

Pinnock was ordered to pay attorney fees of \$15,213 and complete four hours of ethics and professional responsibility classes given by the state bar.

Pinnock, who has cerebral palsy, has made his living since 1992 by sending notices or filing lawsuits against business owners, include coin laundry operators, alleging violations of the federal disabilities act, and demanding that changes be made and a settlement paid to him.

ARIZONA EMPLOYERS FEEL HEAT ON IMMIGRATION

Arizona leads the nation in population growth. More illegal immigrants cross its border than any other in the United States. Now, in an apparent backlash to those trends, the state is leading the charge to halt illegal immigration by cracking down on employers, according to a report in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Its new law effectively sets up a two-strikes penalty. A business employing an illegal immigrant would have its business license suspended temporarily. A second offense would mean a permanent revocation of that license.

The new law "takes the most aggressive action in the country against employers who knowingly or intentionally hire undocumented workers," said Gov. Janet Napolitano. She said she decided to sign the bill because "Congress has failed miserably."

This get-tough attitude with businesses is growing across the U.S. As of April, 40 other states had introduced 199 bills related to employment of undocumented workers—

the top subject of immigration-related legislation in the states, according to a report for the National Conference of State Legislatures. Although Arizona's new law is apparently the harshest so far, Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Tennessee and West Virginia are still in the process of enacting legislation to force employers to verify their workers' legal status, cautions Dirk Hegen, an expert on immigration policy at the NCSL. Now that federal immigration reform has stalled in Congress, more states are likely to act, he added.

The bigger challenge, however, may be enforcing such laws, if Arizona is any example.

While Arizona business organizations are nearly unanimous in saying they want to comply with the new law, they argue that it may prove onerous for employers.

"We are going to be engaging in this mass education campaign to let businesses in Arizona know what it contains, what they need to do to be in compliance, and then what the penalties are for not complying," says Ann Seiden, director of communications for the Arizona

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Chamber of Commerce and Industry. But “we feel like [this law] puts this unfair burden on the backs of businesses in this state to solve a national problem.”

It is already a federal offense to hire an illegal immigrant. But the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 has rarely been enforced, at least until this past year. And employers were not required to use the federal ID-verification system that sprang from that law. Now, under the Arizona law, companies have to use that system, known as the Basic Pilot Program.

And that requirement puts employers at risk, business experts say.

For example, an illegal immigrant may use a stolen Social Security number on a job application that throws up no red flags initially. But if that illicit number is later discovered in any investigation, the employer could see her business closed down for days while investigators figure out what happened.

Another challenge: the Basic Pilot Program had a 4 percent error rate last year, business groups point out.

The system will force businesses to spend more money

to ensure they’re complying with the law and on legal fees if they’re charged with infractions, business experts say.

“This law has the potential for some bite to it,” says Dawn McLaren, an economist at Arizona State University. “It raises the cost of doing business here”—and in a way that’s not easy to determine in advance.

On a violation, an employer may avoid losing her license because she didn’t “knowingly” or “intentionally” hire an undocumented worker, but she still will most likely incur legal fees in defending her actions, McLaren pointed out.

Napolitano has asked the state legislature to return in a special session this fall to address some of what she called “flaws” of the new measure, including the lack of protection for critical infrastructure. “Hospitals, nursing homes, and power plants could be shut down for days because of a single wrongful employment decision,” she said in a statement. And “the revocation provision is overbroad and could cause a business with multiple locations to face shutdown of its entire operation based on an infraction that occurred at only one location.”



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CLA HOLDS ANNUAL AFFILIATE CONFERENCE

The Coin Laundry Association will hold its Annual Affiliate Conference on Aug. 15 at the DoubleTree Hotel O'Hare in Rosemont, Ill. Representatives from each affiliate will be on hand for this one-day meeting.

For more information, call CLA Director of Membership Sue Lally at (630) 963-5547.

By the Numbers: Texas

| | Texas | U.S. | | Texas | U.S. |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Population | 25,507,783 | 299,398,484 | Households | 7,393,354 | 105,480,101 |
| Population, percent change, 2000 to 2005 | 12.7% | 6.4% | Persons per household | 2.74 | 2.59 |
| Persons under 5 years old, percent | 8.2% | 6.8% | Median household income | \$41,645 | \$44,334 |
| Persons under 18 years old, percent | 27.7% | 24.8% | Land area (square miles) | 261,797 | 3,537,438 |
| Persons 65 years old and over, percent | 9.9% | 12.4% | Persons per square mile | 79.6 | 79.6 |
| Women, percent | 50.2% | 50.7% | Self-Service Laundries | | |
| Whites, percent* | 83.2% | 80.2% | Total | 1,975 | |
| African Americans, percent* | 11.7% | 12.8% | Receipts | \$316,970,000 | |
| Asians, percent* | 3.3% | 4.3% | Receipts/Percentage of U.S. | 7.34% | |
| Hispanics, percent** | 35.1% | 14.4% | Annual Payroll | \$37,279,000 | |
| Whites, not Hispanic, percent | 49.2% | 66.9% | Paid Employees | 2,826 | |
| Housing units | 9,026,011 | 124,521,886 | | | |
| Homeownership rate | 63.8% | 66.2% | | | |
| Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent | 24.2% | 26.4% | | | |
| Median value of owner-occupied housing units | \$82,500 | \$119,600 | | | |

* Includes those reporting only one race.

** Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, North American Industry Classification System

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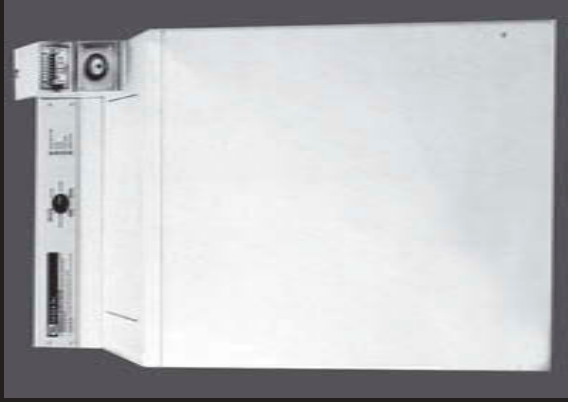
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