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- Best Buy
- Co., Inc.
- Blain's
- Farm & Fleet
- JCPenney
- Kohl's
- Macy's
- Sears
- Holdings
- Corporation
- Shopko
- Target
- Wisconsin
- Jewelers
- Association

To: Joint Committee on Finance
Fr: Scott Stenger, for the Alliance of Wisconsin Retailers
Re: Opposition to Joint and Several Liability budget provisions
Date: April 28, 2009

The Alliance of Wisconsin Retailers employs over 50,000 people in the State of Wisconsin. It has over 450 retail locations and is in virtually every city in the State of Wisconsin (populations over 35,000). In addition to providing excellent wages and benefits to its employees, AWR and its ancillary economic partners like the transportation and construction industries have provided consistent economic growth in the State of Wisconsin.

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However, the retail economic climate has been significantly impacted by current economic conditions. Specifically, it is currently faced with stiff challenges as consumer spending has dramatically been reduced. The net effect of this substantial reduction in spending has led to numerous retailers across the country shuttering its doors, forced layoffs, hiring freezes, reduced hours for part-time and full-time employees, reduction in benefits and a reduction in the store growth/expansion of retailers. This has and will continue to impact each and every employee of AWR.

The AWR remains strongly opposed to the proposed changes in the Governor's budget relating to contributory negligence. Such a sweeping change in Wisconsin law will significantly increase the insurance premiums Wisconsin retailers must pay to receive business insurance which directly impacts our ability to grow our businesses in Wisconsin. At a time when we should be looking for ways to stimulate the state's economy this provision will further burden Wisconsin's retail community and send us in the wrong direction.

This is an extremely important issue and deserves scrutiny and input from all affected parties a public hearing would provide. We are not opposed to compensating injured parties, however, the changes contained in the Governor's budget tilt the balance in one direction at the expense of Wisconsin retailers. We urge the Committee to remove this provision from the budget and allow all parties to participate in the process with a separate piece of legislation.