

INDEPENDENT BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

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SMALL BUSINESS REPORT SMALL BUSINESS REPORT SMALL

IBA SMALL BUSINESS REPORT - December 16, 2016

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NOTICE: The information contained in the publication is intended to alert the reader to issues, laws, regulations and events which may affect the operations of a small business. The information is presented in a summary form and is not intended to assure compliance with laws or regulations which may apply to any specific business. The information is not intended as legal advice. The reader is advised to seek the advice of a qualified attorney, accountant or other advisor to obtain specific compliance advice with respect to the laws, regulations or other issues which may apply to a specific business.

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IBA SMALL BUSINESS REPORT



December 16, 2016

Governor Inslee Proposes \$4.4 Billion in New State Taxes

Just 34 days after his re-election, Governor Inslee has informally proposed \$4.4 Billion in new state taxes for the 2017 Legislature. The new taxes would include:

- 67% increase in the state's services B&O tax - going from 1.5% of gross income to 2.5% of gross income. **Over 90% of Washington's service businesses are small businesses.**
- A 7.9% state capital gains income tax that will affect any small business that is sold or transferred. Governor Inslee's proposal includes an exemption from the new tax for agricultural livestock land but **only provides a small business exemption for depreciable assets.**
- A \$25 per ton carbon tax on large firms emitting carbon (i.e. oil refineries, power plants, etc.) This would add about 41-cents to the cost of a gallon of gasoline or diesel. **This is very similar to the carbon tax that was on the November 2016 ballot that was voted down by about 60% of Washington voters just a month ago.**
- Extends the economic nexus for retailing B&O tax purposes
- Limit REET foreclosure exemption
- Refund state portion of sales tax to nonresidents
- Repeal sales tax exemption for trade-ins valued over \$10,000
- Repeal the sales tax exemption on bottled water
- Repeal the use tax exemption for extracted fuel, except hog fuel

IBA will be opposing these new taxes.

Republican legislators have already reacted with outrage.

Now is the time for you to call your State Legislators and express your views on Governor Inslee's 2017 Tax Increase Proposals.

You can identify your legislators and how to contact them via the Internet at:

www.ibaw.net/2017legislators.pdf

Great Court Decision Stops Overtime Rule

In a very interesting 20 page decision, the United States District Court in the Eastern Division of Texas determined that the recently adopted federal rule increasing the minimum salary paid per week (from \$23,660/yr. to \$47,476/yr.) to salaried workers to be exempt from overtime, should not go into effect as scheduled on December 1, 2016.

For more details about the Courts decision via the Internet, go to:

www.ibaw.net/courtsalaryovertime.pdf

What Happens Next?

No timetable has been given on when the judge would rule on the merits of the underlying lawsuit.

The next action is for the judge to hear the entire case and make a final ruling. This could happen in early 2017

This injunction indicates that the judge already feels that the Plaintiff's case is

likely to prevail.

If the judge changes his mind and decides that the DOL has the authority to raise the salary threshold as much as it's trying to do, the rule changes could take effect rather quickly after such a ruling. **As a result, employers must stay ready to comply with the salaried worker overtime exemption changes.**

The question now is DOL's likelihood to vigorously defend its rule. It will likely be limited or non-existent in light of the fact that the Trump administration will take office in a month.

A limited or a non-existent defense would most likely result in a death blow for the rule by the Court.

The next option is for the DOL to appeal this decision to the federal Court of Appeals and to seek the Court of Appeals to quash the injunction. That would take many months, so the rule is not likely to take effect for months or years.

Another possibility: Trump will work with the DOL to issue a smaller increase to the salary threshold. Several of the business groups involved in the lawsuit have said they'd be OK with a more moderate increase to the threshold. But Trump has indicated he wants to focus on rolling back regulations. It's unlikely he'd take this approach anytime soon. If this approach were taken, it would take two to three years

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to adopt a new rule and go through the rulemaking process to adopt a new rule.

Bottom line, it could take weeks or years depending on what happens. We regret we cannot give you any better estimate of how long this issue will remain in limbo, but that clearly is an unknown.

Stay tuned!

Time Sheet Records

As a result of the recent DOL rule on overtime for salaried employees, IBA has received a number of inquiries from members asking what statement they should use on their worker completed weekly time records as part of complying with the new U.S. Department of Labor's overtime exemption for salaried workers.

Disclaimer: The following is an example but is not legal advice and should not be considered as legal advice. The reader must consult with a qualified attorney for legal advice.

One of the requirements of the new - now delayed - U.S. Department of Labor's overtime exemption for salaried workers that may have required a business to have some of its salaried employees complete a weekly time record that reported their daily work hours for each day of the week. A part of that weekly work record should include a verification statement that the weekly work record is accurate and that the worker has received their required meal and rest breaks and be verified by the workers signature on the weekly work record to avoid future wage claims.

Below is a sample of such a verification statement.

Disclaimer: The statement below is an example of language that might appear on a weekly payroll record kept by an employee. The statement below should not be considered legal advice. The reader must consult with a qualified attorney for legal advice.

I certify that these hours are a true and accurate record of all time worked during the pay period, (2) that I received a thirty minute meal break during each day that I worked more than five consecutive hours, and (3) that I received a ten-minute rest break for each four-hour work period.

Signed by the worker

Great New Small Biz Health Care Law

President Obama has just signed a major piece of small business health care legislation called the Small Business Healthcare Relief Act (SBHRA).

This legislation will end the \$36,500 per employee penalty small employers have faced for paying some of their employees' individual health care premiums if they comply with this law.

This means you can encourage your employees to purchase an individuals health care plan from the government-run Exchange or from another private insurer and you, the employer, can pay part of the employee's premium through a new Health Reimbursement Account.

This allows small business a great new way to offer a health care benefit to their workers without the hassles of having to select and offer a small group health care plan. It will allow you to say, I'll pay \$50 (pick an amount) per month for your individual health care insurance - tax free. As you will see, this is more complex than

it might seem, but it is definitely a good step forward.

Four of Washington's U.S. Representatives co-sponsored the SBHRA: Rep. Kilmer; Rep. McMorris-Rodgers; Rep. DelBene; and Rep. Heck. A Thank You letter to them is appropriate.

The SBHRA becomes effective on January 1, 2017, so you can do this beginning next year.

The SBHRA creates a new benefits plan: the "Qualified Small Employer Health Reimbursement Arrangement."

The new HRA benefit needs to be offered to all full-time employees. Generally, an employer must make the same HRA contributions for all eligible employees; however, you may assign differing amounts depending on an employee's age and family status. There is an annual employer contribution cap of \$4,950 for single employees and \$10,000 for families.

This new law will not be easy to administer so if you are interested in taking advantage of this new law sooner than later, there is a firm very closely involved in with the SBHRA legislation who is prepared to administer this new law. It is Zane Benefits and you can find them on the Internet at: www.zanebenefits.com IBA receives no compensation or benefit if you use the services of Zane Benefits.

New I-9 Form Starts January 22, 2017

There is a new I-9 (Employment Eligibility form) taking effect by January 22, 2017. It is very important that you comply with this new I-9 form requirement by January 22, 2017.

There are two versions of this new I-9 form. One that is completed on a computer and is being called the "Smart I-

9,” and the second is an upgraded paper version. The goal of the new “Smart I-9” that is completed on a computer is to improve getting the forms completed correctly. This new “Smart I-9” includes prompts from drop down menus, and error detection. To use the new “Smart I-9”, you must download it onto a computer that your employees can use to complete the new I-9, or you can fill out a new, upgraded paper version of the I-9 form as you have in the past and then store completed form as required by law.

There is a new 70-page I-9 form manual to aid workers and employers to complete the new I-9. IBA has reviewed this manual and finds it very helpful to correctly comply with the federal I-9 laws as it contains clearly identified important “NOTES” on many pages that are very important for employers to understand to avoid penalties and lawsuits. Notes like:

- **NOTE:** You cannot contract for the labor of an individual if you know that he or she is not authorized to work in the United States
- **NOTE:** Providing a Social Security number on Form I-9 is voluntary for all employees unless you are an employer participating in the USCIS E-Verify program Providing an e-mail address or telephone number is voluntary **You may not ask an employee to provide you a specific document with his or her Social Security number on it. To do so may constitute unlawful discrimination.** For more information on E-Verify, see Part Six. For more information on unlawful discrimination, see Part Four.
- **NOTE:** If you participate in E-Verify, you may only accept List B documents that bear a photograph. You can access this manual via the Internet at: www.ibaw.net/uscisworkinusa.pdf

Employers may continue using the Form I-9 with a revision date of

03/08/2013N through Jan. 21, 2017. **By Jan. 22, 2017, employers must use the revised form. The new form is available via the Internet at: www.uscis.gov/i-9**

Employers should continue to follow existing storage and retentions rules for all of their new and previously completed Forms I-9. Visit www.uscis.gov/I-9-Central for more information.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published its final rule to modernize and improve several aspects of certain employment-based nonimmigrant and immigrant visa programs.

The USCIS has also amended regulations to better enable U.S. employers to hire and retain certain foreign workers who are beneficiaries of approved employment-based immigrant visa petitions and are waiting to become lawful permanent residents.

One of the provisions in this rule will automatically extend the employment authorization and validity of Employment Authorization Documents (EADs or Form I-766) for certain individuals who apply on time to renew their EADs in the same employment eligibility category. The rule states that, in these situations, an employee who has an expired EAD will be able to provide that expired EAD in combination with Form I-797C, Notice of Action, for the renewal application as a List A document for Form I-9.

To more easily complete Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, we suggest you download the PDF directly to your local computer using the latest version of the free [Adobe Reader](#) This new “Smart I-9” may require some software upgrades to your computer. For best results, ensure that you use the most current version of the

browser of your choice and the latest free [Adobe Reader](#).

USCIS has modernized and improved several aspects of certain employment-based nonimmigrant and immigrant visa programs.

The USCIS has amended its regulations to better enable U.S. employers to hire and retain certain foreign workers who are beneficiaries of approved employment-based immigrant visa petitions and are waiting to become lawful permanent residents. This rule goes into effect on Jan. 17, 2017.

Among other things, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) new rule will:

- Clarify and improve longstanding DHS policies and practices implementing sections of the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act and the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act related to certain foreign workers, which will enhance USCIS’ consistency in adjudication.
- Better enable U.S. employers to employ and retain high-skilled workers who are beneficiaries of approved employment-based immigrant visa petitions (Form I-140 petitions) while also providing stability and job flexibility to these workers. The rule increases the ability of these workers to further their careers by accepting promotions, changing positions with current employers, changing employers and pursuing other employment opportunities.
- Improve job portability for certain beneficiaries of approved Form I-140 petitions by maintaining a petition’s validity under certain circumstances despite an employer’s withdrawal of the approved petition or the termination of the employer’s business.
- Clarify and expand when individu-

als may keep their priority date when applying for adjustment of status to lawful permanent residence.

- Allow certain high-skilled individuals in the United States with E-3, H-1B, H-1B1, L-1 or O-1 nonimmigrant status, including any applicable grace period, to apply for employment authorization for a limited period. For more information, via the Internet, go to: www.ibaw.net/uscisworkinusa.pdf

For more information, visit the “*Working in the U.S.*” page or read the rule in the Federal Register available at:

www.ibaw.net/uscisworkinusa.pdf

For more information on USCIS and its programs, please visit www.uscis.gov or follow the uscis on www.youtube.com/uscis, www.facebook.com/uscis and the USCIS blog The Beacon at: <http://blog.uscis.gov/>

Small employers should also watch the e-verify video from the WSCIS. For a link to this video, go to:

www.ibaw.net/uscisworkinusa.pdf

The New I-9 Form

The new “Smart I-9” form uses dropdown menus to help complete the new form on a computer. These new drop down menus help by:

- Ensuring data is in the correct format
- Includes instructions as you complete the form when you click on little question marks in each box on the form to help you complete the form.

The new “Smart I-9” is not a fully electronic form, you are still have your employee sign the completed form and you must sign the completed form and anyone (i.e. interpreter, etc.) who helps the employee complete the form must

sign the completed form. Then verify the form is correctly completed and securely store the I-9 as required by law.

Increased Penalties For I-9 Violations

On August 1, 2016, the U.S. Department of Justice increased its penalties for I-9 and other employee work eligibility violations. Below is a brief summary.

Form I-9 Paperwork Violations:

Previous fine: \$110 to \$1,100 per violation

New fine: \$216 to \$2,126 per violation

E-Verify – failure to notify DHS of continuing employment when employee receives Final Non-Confirmation

Previous fine: \$500 to \$1,000 per worker

New fine: \$751 to \$1,502 per worker

Unfair Immigration-Related Practices (First Order):

Previous fine: \$375 to \$3,200 per worker

New fine: \$445 to \$3,563 per worker

Unfair Immigration-Related Practices (Document Abuse):

Previous fine: \$110 to \$1,100 per worker

New fine: \$178 to \$1,782 per worker

In addition, the penalties for knowingly hiring, recruiting, referring, or retaining an unauthorized worker will increase per unauthorized individual **from \$539 to \$4,313 for the first offense; from \$4,313 to \$10,781 for the second offense; and \$6,469 to \$21,563 for subsequent offenses.**

New Posters

There are 3 new versions of govern-

ment required posters that some employers need to post, depending on the size of the employer. IBA is also providing links all poster most employers must have.

All employers need a new **Fair Labor Standards Act poster** with new provision on:

- The right for Nursing mothers’ to have a private area to express breast milk
- Information about the difference between employees and independent contractors.
- The posters includes a QR code that directs workers to the Department’s website.

You can download the new FLSA poster via the Internet at:

www.ibaw.net/posters2016.pdf

All employers need a new **Employee Polygraph Protection Act (EPPA) poster** that makes some minor changes like dropping the explanation of employer penalties for violations and instead refers workers to the Department’s website for these details. You can download the new EPPA poster via the Internet at:

www.ibaw.net/posters2016.pdf

There is a new **FMLA poster** required to be posted by employers who employ 50 or more employees in a 75 mile area. The new FMLA poster is easier to read and drops some of the details included in the older version of this poster. You can download the new FMLA poster via the Internet at:

www.ibaw.net/posters2016.pdf

Laws Against Small Business Customer Discrimination

Most small businesses are not clear on their responsibilities under the Washington State laws against customer discrimination. The Arlene’s Flowers

case recently heard by the Washington State Supreme Court, is a good example for small business owners to learn from.

Arlene's Flowers in Richland, WA refused to provide flower arrangements to Mr. Ingersoll for his same sex marriage ceremony based on her religious conviction against same-sex marriage.

Mr. Ingersoll filed a complaint with the Washington State Attorney General claiming a violation of the Washington State Consumer Protection Act and also sued Arlene's Flowers for discrimination. Arlene's Flowers and Ms. Stutzman, CEO of Arlene's Flowers, Inc. are now both before the Washington State Supreme Court and are attempting to overturn the Superior Court of Benton County's decision that Arlene's Flowers violated both the Washington State Laws Against Discrimination and the Washington State Consumer Protection Act.

This case provides clear insight on the state's position on how Washington businesses comply with Washington State Laws Against Discrimination.

The State is arguing that once Ms. Stutzman opened a business, her personal right to refuse service based on her religious convictions were lost.

What Ms. Stutzman could do or not do as an individual citizen under the USA Constitution's first amendment protecting free speech, she could not do as a small business owner under the Washington State Consumer Protection Act and laws Against Discrimination.

Why? Because the State argues that once you open a business, you commit to providing your services and products to the public, without discriminating against any individual from a protected class of individuals who seeks your services or products and your in-

dividual rights do not prevail.

Washington State law defines protected individuals as, "...free from discrimination because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability is recognized as and declared to be a civil right."

Washington State's law goes on to state: "...any unfair practice prohibited by this chapter (laws against discrimination) which is committed in the course of trade or commerce as defined in the Consumer Protection Act, chapter [19.86](#) RCW, is, for the purpose of applying that chapter, a matter affecting the public interest, is not reasonable in relation to the development and preservation of business, and is an unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce."

It is important that every business owner understand how the state of Washington intends to implement its laws against discrimination. Thus we bring this important case to your attention.

The Washington State Supreme Court has not yet ruled on this case and will not likely rule on this case for many months. IBA expects the Court to rule against Arlene's Flowers and Ms. Stutzman.

To avoid a costly lawsuit and trial based on a claim of discrimination, it is important for you to understand that you may be sued for violating Washington State discrimination laws if you refuse or restrict providing services or products to any individual based on "race, creed, color, national origin, sex, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or

physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability is recognized as and declared to be a civil right."

IBA has also found information about when a business can refuse service and it can be found via the Internet at: www.ibaw.net/refuseservice.pdf

"Free" Employee Handbook

"FREE" Employee Handbook

IBA has discovered a source of a "FREE" Employee Handbook that commonly costs hundreds or thousands of dollars that is accessible by IBA members. You might consider this a holiday gift from IBA.

Disclaimer: Independent Business Association provides business advice and does not provide legal advice. The following information must be considered business advice and is not legal advice. The reader is responsible for seeking legal advice regarding the following Handbook information with respect to compliance with any local, state or federal laws or any employment related issue.

Employment attorneys strongly recommend every employer have an employee handbook. This is an opportunity for you to have an employee handbook prepared for your business for FREE (trial membership: read RocketLawyer's Terms of Service - Use Rocket Lawyer free one week and cancel anytime.) or for a \$30 fee. RocketLawyer states, "Our documents are created and reviewed by lawyers and legal professionals." You need to answer a few questions and your customized document is ready to print and review in minutes."

This Employee Handbook is customized for Washington State and for your business size by its creator, RocketLawyer.

If you use this service from RocketLawyer, it will ask you a number of questions about your company's dress code, sick leave, personal leave, vacation leave and other company policies before it creates a document for your business. You should consider these issues before using this RocketLawyer system.

The Employee Handbook created by this RocketLawyer service attempts to preserve the "employment at will" relationship between your company and your employees, a critical element recommended by employment law attorneys. To determine if it successfully achieves that goal, you must seek the legal advice of a qualified employment law attorney to review the document prepared by Rocket Lawyer.

The table of contents of the RocketLawyer Employment Handbook includes 21 provisions. You can view the contents at: www.ibaw.net/RocketLawyer.pdf

You can access this service from Rocket Lawyer at the following Internet Address: www.ibaw.net/RocketLawyer.pdf

2017 Employment Law Tune-Up

Employment laws are one of the biggest challenges small employers must deal with. IBA is aware of an employment law tune-up workshop that will be held in the Puget Sound area in late February. The workshop costs \$149 as compared with \$300 to \$500+ per hour to talk with an employment law attorney or HR consultant. This workshop will cover many subjects important to small employers.

For more details and information via the Internet go to:

www.ibaw.net/2017laborlaw.pdf

President Trump And Labor Issues

Here are some of the employment and labor issues likely to see early action in the Trump administration:

1. **Repealing the new Department of Labor's salaried workers overtime exemption rule.** President Trump cannot directly repeal this new overtime exemption requirement that is currently on hold as a result of a recent Court injunction (see page 1 of this Report). This rule requires employers to increase the pay of salaried workers from \$23,660 to \$47,476 so that the employees can be exempt from overtime pay requirements. It took over a year for this rule to be adopted through the federal rulemaking process. It would take about that long for Mr. Trump to repeal this rule through the same process. Another option is for Congress to repeal the rule, and that is a possibility, but still faces serious difficulties as it requires 8 Democrat votes in the Senate to repeal the rule. We can all hope the Courts ultimately block the rule permanently. This is likely the fastest way to kill it.
2. **Repealing the Affordable Care Act.** This is easier said than done. President - Elect Trump has made it one of his first priorities, and so has Speaker Ryan. Repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will require 8 Senate Democrat votes to avoid a perpetual filibuster. The likely alternative approach is to propose a rewrite of the Affordable Care Act that will satisfy 8 Senate Democrats to stop a perpetual filibuster. President Trump and Speaker Ryan and everyone in Congress face another challenge.

The Affordable Care Act is nearing total collapse as insurers cease offering health plans that comply with its requirements. If most or all health insurers refuse to write insurance plans that meet the ACA requirements, the law is dead as the ACA relies on private insurance plans to function.

3. **New Immigration Provisions?** One of Candidate Trump's top issues was to stop illegal immigration into the USA. He talked about a wall and he talked about deporting current illegal immigrants now in the USA. The fact is, illegal immigrants are working everywhere in the USA. Deporting them will hurt the USA economy as there are not enough willing legal workers in the USA to take their jobs. The other concern IBA has is how much more responsibility will employers have to take on to ensure they are not employing illegal immigrants and where will employers find replacement workers? This issue could be very difficult for small employers as the employment verification system increases in complexities—see page 2 of this IBA Report.
4. **Paid Worker Leave?** Remember President-Elect Trump's daughter promoting paid-maternity-leave during the campaign and Candidate Trump's support of her proposal? This could set off an effort to set up a paid - leave proposal for the 2017 Congress. IBA and other business groups have opposed a federal paid leave law. Clearly, any new paid-leave requirement will be of concern to smaller businesses. Stay tuned!
5. **Higher Federal Minimum Wage?** Democrats have been pressing for a higher federal minimum wage for several years. The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour and was last increased in 2009. Voters recently increased the Washington State minimum

wage to \$11.00 per hour beginning on January 1, 2017. Seattle, SeaTac and Tacoma have also set increased minimum wage rates. Activists have been pressing for a \$15 minimum wage all across the USA. Mr. Trump has suggest that he could support an increase in the federal minimum wage, but not \$15. For the current federal minimum wage to keep up with inflation, it would have to be \$8.16 in 2016. There are lots of ways people are calculating what they think the minimum wage increase should be. The big question is, will President Trump and Congress increase the federal minimum wage?

Economic Forecast

On December 2nd, the State's economist delivered his economic forecast to Legislators for 2017.

State economist Steve Lerch explained that the Washington economy will likely continue to grow slowly in 2017 and result in a slight state revenue increase in the year. He went on to explain that the USA economy has shown good growth in the 3rd and going into the 4th quarter of 2016, but he does not expect it to continue as strong in 2017. His forecast is based on the slow global economy growth and the lack of increase in labor productivity to increase personal income. He explained the growth or lack thereof in personal income is a major factor in forecasting the state's future economy.

He further stated that the USA economy is changing from a manufacturing based economy to a service based economy and it is almost impossible to measure productivity growth in the service industry. He is forecasting a slow growth in personal income. He explained that he and his staff feel the aerospace, software, and tech industries will slow in Washington State in 2017 as compared to 2016. Mr. Lerch is forecasting gradual oil price increases during 2017.

He was asked about the likely impact of the minimum wage increase in the state's economy. He answered that he and his staff do not expect much of an economic impact from the minimum wage increase. He and his staff feel that while the minimum wage will go up, that hours worked will likely go down to counter the wage cost increase.

He concluded with the probability of this forecast coming true. He said that there is a 25% chance that the economy will grow more slowly than he and his staff are now forecasting, and a 15% chance that the economy will grow faster than their predication. The reason for the more pessimistic probability is a bigger than expected decrease in aerospace, tech, and software industries, and the potential of a two quarter recession hitting in 2017. The optimistic probability is based on the aerospace, tech, and software industries will enjoy growth in 2017, and there will not be a two quarter recession in 2017. His bottom line is that the state's revenue and economic forecast has a more pessimistic probability than an optimistic probability.

Federal Reserve Raises Interest Rates

On Wednesday, December 14th, the Federal Reserve Board voted to increase the USA's benchmark federal funds interest rate by 0.25% and it is planning three more 0.25% increases in 2017.

This is the first USA rate increase in 10 years.

Interest rates have been held artificially low by the U.S. Treasury that bought large volumes of federal bonds since the Great Recession to lower interest rates and encourage an economic recovery and economic development. The economic recovery has been slower than expected over the past two years but the Federal Reserve now feels

the economy is strong enough to withstand higher interest rates.

It is costing USA taxpayers to keep interest rates at such low levels and it is also hurting many retired senior citizens who need higher interest rates to keep up with inflation.

Some economists believe an interest rate increase will slow the 2017 economy. Time will tell.

Holiday Greetings From IBA!

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Bodhi Day, the Winter Solstice, the New Year or some other event in the months of December and January, IBA wants to extend our best wishes to you during this special time of year. 2016 has been a stabilizing year for most of us. There have been some bright spots along the way such as:

- No increases in general state taxes in 2016.
- Many legislative proposals harmful to small businesses never became law.
- The economy and your wallet benefited from continuing low oil costs.

In addition to those bright spots, we must also reflect on the positives all around us.

- Our family members who make our lives so much richer and better. Make sure they know you appreciate them and their support.
- Our dedicated employees who make our business operations possible.
- Your customers who have made your business possible over the years.
- Your suppliers and vendors who help you through thick and thin.
- Your advisors, i.e. your banker, your accountant, IBA and others you rely on for information and assistance.

IBA will be here trying to make 2017 the best it can be for you!