



Lake Champlain Regional
Chamber of Commerce



Vermont Retail Association

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2011
CONTACTS:

Dawn Francis, Co-Director of Government Affairs, Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce; (802) 863-3489 ext. 210 dawn@vermont.org

Tasha Wallis, Executive Director, Vermont Retail Association; (802) 760-7466
tasha@vretailers.com

Lake Champlain Chamber, Vermont Retail Association Applaud New Legislation Protecting Vermont Florists

Burlington, VT— The Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Vermont Retail Association advocated for a law that would protect Vermont florists from “masquerading” by out-of-state businesses, and the 2011 Vermont legislature responded. The new legislation, which is awaiting Governor Peter Shumlin’s signature, will prohibit out-of-state businesses from misleading online consumers into thinking that they are local florists. The deceptive practice had been hurting the Vermont floral industry as well as increasing costs to unwitting online purchasers.

Bonnie Hawley is President of the Vermont Retail Association’s Board of Trustees and also owner of Hawley’s Florist in Rutland. “Out-of-state businesses have been using my Hawley Florist name as their own on the Internet. These businesses have taken revenue, created confusion, and harmed my reputation. Many customers have ordered through these other businesses online, thinking they were ordering from my store. They paid an additional \$15 to \$20 in service fees and usually were disappointed when the flowers didn’t come from my store. When they had problems, they called me, thinking we had delivered the flowers! Hopefully this legislation will dissuade big, out-of-state companies from using these deceptive practices from now on.”

According to Dawn Francis, Co-Director of Government Affairs for the Lake Champlain Chamber, this issue was brought to the Chamber’s attention by Steve Juiffre of Chappells’ Florist in South Burlington. “Mr Juiffre was our champion for this issue and provided invaluable information and testimony that helped persuade legislators of the importance of the issue to maintaining the Vermont brand and preserving these small businesses.”

Tasha Wallis, Executive Director of the Vermont Retail Association, was also pleased. According to Wallis, “Vermonters were being misled into thinking they were buying local, when in fact the money was going to unscrupulous out-of-state businesses. The new legislation will prohibit that.”

Complaints about deceptive advertising can be done through the Vermont Consumer Assistance Program at www.uvm.edu/consumer. Under the language of the new law, florists or consumers can bring their own independent legal action, or consider working together against these deceptive practices.