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Leader of NC Retail Merchants Association Receives High Honor

Raleigh, NC (August 21, 2014) – Andy Ellen, President and General Counsel of the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA) (<http://www.ncrma.org/>), received a top honor today at the *Triangle Business Journal's* Corporate Counsel Awards program. Ellen was honored during an awards luncheon at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Convention Center in Durham, recognizing outstanding in-house attorneys who have been involved in charities and philanthropic activities in the Triangle.

Ellen is the fifth person to lead NCRMA since its inception in 1902 and is responsible for leading NCRMA's seven affiliated companies. He's also credited with negotiating the merger of the North Carolina Food Dealers Association into the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association – one of the first mergers of non-profits in North Carolina.

"I was both surprised and honored to receive this special recognition," said Ellen whose vision and strategies work to protect the interests of retail businesses across the state. "As an in-house counsel you wake up every day with the same client and you work with the same people to achieve specific goals. Therefore, the relationships I form are long term and far more personal compared to a private corporate attorney. This allows me to advocate for retail businesses through efforts that build over time."

Originally from Southern Pines, North Carolina, Ellen is a 1992 graduate of Elon University. He received his Juris Doctorate from the Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law at Campbell University in 1997, and became licensed to practice law in North Carolina that same year.

Prior to signing on as NCRMA's legal counsel and lobbyist in 1998, Andy lobbied with the North Carolina Farm Bureau. During the 14 years that he has advocated for the retail industry before the North Carolina General Assembly, Executive Branch and regulatory bodies, he has also served on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Professional Lobbyists Association and Co-Chaired the Legislative Committee for the Young Lawyers Division of the North Carolina Bar Association.

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research has ranked Andy as one of the most 15 influential lobbyists during each of the past three biennium's including being ranked as the second most effective lobbyist in North Carolina for the 2009-2010 Legislative Session. Ellen lives in Wake Forest with his wife, Tricia, and their two daughters, Julia and Jenna.

About the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association

The North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA) is a nonprofit trade association organized in 1902 to improve the business climate for retailers in North Carolina. Over 100 years later, NCRMA remains the voice of the retail industry for North Carolina. NCRMA represents the interests of individual merchants before the General Assembly and serves as a vital link to state government. Its credibility lies in its longevity and commitment to serving the ever-changing needs of its members. The Association's membership includes more than 25,000 stores from across the state whose business represents 75 percent of North Carolina's retail sales volume. NCRMA serves both large and small retailers from multi-state chains to local "mom and pops," and all types of merchants including antique, apparel, art, automotive, book, carpet, department, drug, electronics, floral, furniture, grocery, hardware, jewelry, paint and variety stores. For more information, visit <http://www.ncrma.org/>. To learn more about the retail industry in North Carolina, visit www.thisisretailinc.org.

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