

# The high cost of inaction

By Boston Herald editorial staff | Monday, January 4, 2010 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Editorials

Consumer advocates and labor leaders like to defend the state's onerous item-pricing laws by complaining that store scanners are unreliable and frequently shortchange customers. But it turns out those scanner thingamabobs really do work.

Yes, the devices were 99.5 percent accurate when tested recently as part of an annual survey conducted by the state Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. Fifteen retailers and 75 locations were checked, according to the State House News Service with violators charged \$100 per overcharge. Grand total . . . \$1,900.

We bring this up not only for the benefit of those brave souls headed out to cash in gift cards or take advantage of post-holiday sales. But it serves as a reminder that Massachusetts continues to unnecessarily burden retailers who are already dealing with a dropoff in consumer spending, extraordinary employment costs and (lest anyone forget) a 25 percent increase in the state sales tax.

There are proposals on Beacon Hill to reform the state's item-pricing law to reflect advances in technology and to spare consumers hidden pass-through costs (like the cost of requiring a sticker on every last item in a store), while maintaining safeguards for consumers.

This is one area where Massachusetts ought to change with the times.

**Article URL:** <http://www.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/editorials/view.bg?articleid=1222841>