



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

IN THE MATTER OF

Laith Almontaser
DBA Gulf Convenience LLC
111 Gulf Street, Milford, CT 06460
LSA 118680
laithalmontaser9@gmail.com

July 25, 2025

SUMMARY SUSPENSION ORDER

Gulf Convenience LLC (“Gulf Convenience”) is a convenience store licensed as a Lottery Sales Agent authorized to engage in lottery sales pursuant to license number LSA.118680, which license is issued by the Department of Consumer Protection (“DCP”). The permit was first issued by DCP on December 8, 2023. The permit has been renewed annually, and the current license is set to expire on March 31, 2026. Licensing records list Laith Almontaser (“Mr. Almontaser”) as an owner of the store.

DCP finds that on July 16, 2025, DCP Gaming Investigator Jason Pontz (“Investigator Pontz”) was assigned to be part of a collaborative effort to conduct compliance inspections within the City of Milford at various vape shops that also held lottery credentials. These inspections were a result of a large number of citizen complaints within the town alleging sales of vape and tobacco products to minors. The City of Milford currently does not permit or allow the sale of THC or marijuana substances anywhere within its city limits. Included in these inspections were members of the Milford Police Department (“Milford PD”), Department of Revenue Services agent (“DRS”), Department of Labor Wage and Workplace Standards agents (“Dept. of Labor”) and DCP Drug Control agents. Particular to this summary suspension order was the inspection of Gulf Convenience Store located at 111 Gulf Street. Detective Kish of the Milford PD advised Investigator Pontz that this store particularly had the most complaints in the town.

On July 16, 2025, during Gulf Convenience’s compliance inspection, agency representatives entered the store and began the compliance inspection. The female clerk initially claimed she

did not work there and was only helping the owner briefly as a family friend. She refused to identify herself for an extended period before eventually stating her name was Eesha Kumari Reddy (“Ms. Reddy”), which was later verified by her driver’s permit. Ms. Reddy stated the store is co-managed by Waddah Alkaifi and Laith Almontaser, with Mr. Almontaser reportedly working there daily. A neighboring business reported that Ms. Reddy worked at the store every day.

Investigator Pontz inspected the lottery equipment and found no apparent violations. However, a spinning wheel was observed in the retail area with a sign reading “Spend \$40 to Spin the Wheel.” The wheel listed handwritten prizes such as free chips, free fume vape (above \$40 purchase), a free lighter, and a free small pipe (above \$40). This promotion may constitute illegal gambling under Connecticut General Statute section 53-278b, as it involves consideration, chance, and a prize. The item was subsequently seized with consent from Mr. Almontaser during a follow-up conversation.

While at the store on July 16, Investigator Pontz contacted Mr. Almontaser, the lottery credential holder. Mr. Almontaser stated he was already aware that an inspection was underway. Investigator Pontz asked for Eesha’s full name, as she had not yet been positively identified at that point in time, but Mr. Almontaser claimed he did not know her last name or much about her. Investigator Pontz explained the issues identified during the inspection and how they could impact his lottery credential; Mr. Almontaser acknowledged and said he understood. Mr. Almontaser mentioned he had recently tried to have the credential removed from his name, though a subsequent check of the DCP licensure system showed no evidence of such action. Mr. Almontaser also expressed a willingness to voluntarily forfeit the credential, stating he intends to exit the lottery business and focus on gas stations. Mr. Almontaser further noted he no longer resided at the address in West Haven, CT, as listed on the credential, and provided new addresses in Connecticut and New York to Investigator Pontz.

During the compliance inspection, DCP Drug Control Agents advised Milford Police that they identified numerous violations within the store where several pounds of suspected marijuana were found in both the front and back areas of the store and subsequently seized by Milford PD.

Agent Wilhelm's report also indicated that while in the store she observed cannabis pre-rolls, electronic cigarettes, cannabis flower and edibles openly displayed around the register, all appearing to contain more than 0.3% THC or exceeded the THC milligram limits allowed by law. Agent Wilhelm reported that as she inspected the counter, there was a drawer under the register next to the lottery terminal that contained more THC vapes and THC flower. Her report detailed further violations and confirmed that Milford PD ultimately seized 2.13 pounds of packaged cannabis and loose cannabis flower from the front of the store and an additional 18.52 pounds of packaged cannabis and multiple bags of looser flower from the back of the store. Agent Wilhelm concluded that Gulf Convenience violated the following Connecticut General Statutes related to illegal cannabis sales and distribution: sections 21a-415(b), 21a-278(b)(1)(D), 21a-278b(a), 21a-420c(a), 21a-420r(a), and 21a-420y(a).

During the compliance inspection, Agents from the Dept. of Labor also identified several violations and ordered the store to close until compliance with their standards is achieved.

At the conclusion of the compliance inspection, Detectives from the Milford PD subsequently

secured the store and obtained a Search and Seizure Warrant, which they executed on the premises. During the search, a Sig Sauer .380 caliber semi-automatic pistol was recovered from under clothing on a shelf in a back room. The firearm contained a full magazine and had an obliterated serial number.

Detective Kish of the Milford PD reported that she intends to pursue criminal charges against the ownership of Gulf Convenience, including Mr. Almontaser, the lottery credential holder, pending the outcome of her investigation. Anticipated charges against Mr. Almontaser include:

1. Operating a Drug Factory
2. Possession of Marijuana
3. Possession of Drug Paraphernalia
4. Possession with Intent to Sell
5. Possession of a Firearm with an Obliterated Serial Number (pending further investigation)

Detective Kish is also considering potential interfering with a police officer charge against Ms. Reddy.

This is not the first time that Gulf Convenience has failed a compliance inspection by DCP. Gaming Investigator Suzanne Laiuppa along with DCP Drug Control Agents went to the same Gulf Convenience on February 6, 2025, after the DCP Drug Control Division conducted an inspection following similar complaints of illegal cannabis sales. During Investigator Laiuppa's inspection, she and DCP Drug Control Agents also encountered a female clerk who refused to identify herself but allowed them access to the store. The clerk claimed she did not work there but was the sister of Mr. Almontaser, the lottery credential holder. It is now believed that this individual may have been Ms. Reddy.

During the February 6, 2025, compliance inspection, a large quantity of cannabis products were observed that appeared to have been for sale in the store. Furthermore, several concerning violations were identified by the DCP Drug Control Agents.

The DCP alleges the spinning wheel seized at Gulf Convenience constitutes illegal gambling under Connecticut General Statutes section 53-278b and reflects a lack of integrity and dishonest conduct in violation of section 12-568a-5(e)(3) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies. Additionally, the actions observed during the February 6 and July 16, 2025 inspections, specifically the presence of large quantities of illegal cannabis, pose an imminent risk to public health and safety. Gulf Convenience has promoted the use of unregulated cannabis products, many containing THC levels far exceeding legal limits. The criminal activity at the licensed location has resulted in police intervention and further demonstrates a threat to public funds from potential loss of lottery sales revenue and a risk to bodily injury related to firearms and dangerous illegal drugs. As owner and operator, Mr. Almontaser has created and continues to foster an environment that exposes lottery customers to illegal drugs and gambling, creating an ongoing threat to the public health and safety.

Based upon the foregoing, DCP finds that public health, safety and welfare imperatively require emergency action. In accordance with section 4-182 (c) of the Connecticut General Statutes, **DCP ORDERS** the lottery sales agent license for Gulf Convenience shall be **suspended immediately pending further investigation and no lottery sales may be conducted until further written**

notice from the DCP.

DCP will contact you regarding further enforcement proceedings for revocation or other action.

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Bryan T. Cafferelli
Commissioner of Consumer Protection