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## **American Beverage Licensees annual conference offers fresh perspectives, important recognition for retailers**

*Beverage retailers' meeting brings together beverage industry in Washington, D.C.*

**Bethesda, MD – June 24, 2014** – American Beverage Licensee members and industry colleagues gathered in the nation's capital June 7-9 to exchange ideas, discuss challenges and identify solutions at the 13th ABL Annual Conference. Licensees also met with members of Congress and industry leaders to share their stories and celebrate the positive role they play in their communities.

"As the leader of America's beer, wine and spirits retailers, ABL once again brought together the licensees in Washington to learn more about the beverage alcohol industry and to advocate on the issues that impact retail alcohol businesses," said John Bodnovich, ABL's executive director. "This year's conference provided a perspective on the federal landscape and an exchange of information among attendees from states across the country."

The conference began on June 7 with a grassroots policy briefing by ABL Executive Director John Bodnovich, who encouraged beverage licensees to engage their elected officials at all levels. His briefing covered current legislative issues of interest and how licensees can engage in grassroots advocacy. The opening night beer reception, sponsored by the National Association of Beverage Importers, capped-off the day, and featured a wide selection of imported beer as well as an opportunity for attendees to learn more about the growing import beer category.

The Conference resumed on June 8 with a breakfast sponsored by Serralles USA, prior to the day's general session of speakers and educational presentations. The program began in earnest with Sean Spicer, Communications Director of the Republican National Committee, and Mo Elleithee, former Communications Director of the Democratic National Committee trading their wisdom on the political landscape and the upcoming 2016 election.

Monday's session continued with a lively discussion about the state of the beer industry from brewer, distributor and retailer perspectives. Eric Best, NBWA Chairman and General Manager of Bob Hall LLC, Bruce Jacobson, Chief Sales Officer of Constellation Brands, Beer Division, and Bill Madden, CEO & Executive Brewer of Mad Fox Brewing Company shared their perspectives and forecasts for the beer market moving forward. Dave Matthews, General Counsel of the National Restaurant Association, followed them with a discussion about the upcoming EMV payment card changes, and other payment card issues affecting merchants and consumers.

Before breaking for the annual MillerCoors Luncheon, ABL recognized the 2015 Brown-Forman Retailers of the Year. These leading licensees, nominated by their state affiliates, were honored for their hard work and dedication to their businesses, communities and associations.

Kicking off the afternoon session was Stephanie Hopper, COO of Ballpark Holistic Dispensary, a recreational marijuana retail store owner in Denver, Colorado. Ms. Hopper provided a broad overview of her business,

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the current climate in Colorado and took audience questions about the intricacies of selling marijuana and how current policies are shaping the future of the marijuana industry.

Darnell Holloway presented Conference members with a look at how to manage their Yelp reputation online, and shared relevant examples and best practices for ensuring positive customer interactions. Immediately following the Yelp session, Pete Madland, Executive Director of the Tavern League of Wisconsin, Tim Martin, General Counsel of Alcohoot, and Bob Williamsen, Chief Revenue Officer of Intellicheck/Mobilisa shared their organizations' unique approaches to responsibility and the important role the beverage alcohol industry plays when it comes to preventing underage access to alcohol and misuse of industry products.

The annual conference concluded on Monday night with a craft spirits tasting and banquet sponsored by the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. The ABL Top Shelf Award, ABL's highest honor, was presented to Dr. Peter Cressy, President and CEO of DISCUS, for his industry contributions during his 16-year tenure at DISCUS. DISCUS Vice Chairman and Moët Hennessy USA CEO Jim Clerkin reflected on how Dr. Cressy has helped shape the spirits industry, and emphasized the importance of ABL and retailers to distillers.

Also recognized at the banquet were newly-elected ABL officers: President, Warren Scheidt of Cork Liquors in Columbus, Indiana; Vice President J.J. Moran of Four Winds Liquor & Lounge in Cheyenne, Wyoming; Vice President Bob Sprenger of Bubba's in Marion, Wisconsin; and At-Large representative Paul Santelle of Garden State Discount Liquors in Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

On June 9, ABL members returned to Capitol Hill where they met with members of Congress and their staff to discuss issues affecting beverage licensees including alcohol-related traffic safety policies, music licensing and marketplace fairness reform.

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**American Beverage Licensees** is the preeminent national trade association for beverage alcohol retailers. Direct retail beverage alcohol sales in the United States generate as many as 1.77 million well-paying jobs. ABL's thousands of on-premise and off-premise licensee members are independent and often family-owned establishments. The beverage retailing industry pays over \$19.3 billion in federal taxes and \$16.9 billion in state and local taxes. To learn more about ABL, visit [www.ablusa.org](http://www.ablusa.org).