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ABL Brings Together Beverage Retailers from Across the United States for 15th Annual Meeting

2017 Meeting Provided Informational Sessions & Recognition of Beverage Retailers

April 6, 2017 – Bethesda, MD – Beverage retailers and their partners from across the hospitality industry came together in Las Vegas on March 26-28 for American Beverage Licensees' (ABL) 15th Annual Meeting. Attendees networked with their peers from around the country and learned about emerging issues in the beverage alcohol industry. Meeting speakers addressed a variety of important topics including the issues facing the wholesale tier, emerging trends in the beverage alcohol sector, mobile alcohol ordering platforms, music licensing, the growing recreational cannabis marketplace and legislation, and state alcohol policy initiatives.

"The diversity of this year's annual meeting program recognized the range of ABL member businesses from across the country," said ABL Executive Director John Bodnovich. "From urban to rural, large to small, on-premise to off-premise, there was something from the meeting that all attendees could take home to use in their businesses, state associations and with elected leaders."

Eric Dopkins, CEO & Founder of Milestone Brands, LLC, delivered the keynote address about the keys to growth in the beverage alcohol industry and how best to position one's business for success. The wholesale tier was represented at the meeting by Craig Purser, President & CEO of the National Association of Beverage Wholesalers, and Craig Wolf, President & CEO of the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America, who provided attendees with an overview of where the wholesale tier currently stands important industry issues and where wholesalers are working with retailers.

Senior Vice President of the Beverage Alcohol Practice at The Nielsen Company, Danny Brager, made a presentation about current and emerging trends in the retail environment, which covered various trends shaping the beverage alcohol sector, including Direct-to-Consumer sales and the growing number of places consumers can purchase beverage alcohol.

Following the Annual Luncheon sponsored by MillerCoors, the meeting delved into three important issues for beverage retailers: mobile alcohol ordering, music licensing and recreational marijuana.

The mobile alcohol ordering conversation featured Bryan Goodwin, Senior Vice President – Commercial Sales & Operations at Drizly, and Brad Rosen, CEO & Founder of Drync, who provided attendees with information on how their respective businesses operate, what their entry into the marketplace means for retailers, and how they can work together with retailers. Steve Bene, General Counsel at Pandora Media, Inc., shared his perspective on the current state of music licensing, what it means for retailers, and the various challenges and opportunities that lay ahead when it comes to legislative and legal actions.

In a session titled "*Seeds of Change: The Emerging Cannabis Marketplace & What It Means for the Beverage Alcohol Industry*", Vivien Azer, Managing Director & Senior Research Analyst at Cowen & Company, provided an in-depth economic analysis of the growing cannabis industry and market trends – from investment standpoints to interplay with the existing beverage alcohol market and its key players.

American Beverage Licensees Annual Meeting Offers Fresh Perspectives & Important Recognition for Retailers

The ABL Annual Meeting closed its general session with a focus on state policy issues. New Jersey State Senator Nicholas Scutari discussed his months-long research effort to identify effective recreational marijuana policy measures, including looking at parallels to the alcohol industry's regulatory framework. In a presentation titled "*Alcohol Policy: State of the States*", the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association's Steve Schmidt, Senior Vice President – Public Policy & Communications, and Neal Insley, Senior Vice President & General Council, discussed various alcohol policy related issues currently taking place at the state level, and the implications some of these issues may have at the national level.

The 2017 Annual Meeting also provided an opportunity for ABL to recognize those who make a difference in the industry. Seventeen retail beverage businesses from across the country were recognized with the 2017 *Brown-Forman Retailer of the Year* awards at the ABL Honors Gala. Also recognized was the 2017 ABL Top Shelf Award honoree, Tito Beveridge, Founder & Owner, Tito's Handmade Vodka. The ABL Top Shelf Award recognizes those who have demonstrated excellence over their careers in the beverage alcohol industry and represents the highest recognition given by ABL.

The ABL Board of Directors also elected four beverage licensees to the ABL Executive Committee during the Annual Meeting. These individuals, each serving two-year terms, will lead the association towards meeting its strategic goals and initiatives. The new officers include:

President: Steve Morris | Jorgenson's Restaurant & Lounge | Helena, MT
Vice President Off-Premise: Paul Santelle | Garden State Discount Liquors | Perth Amboy, NJ
Vice President On-Premise: John "JJ" Moran, Jr. | Four Winds Liquor & Lounge | Cheyenne, WY
At-Large: Robert "Bubba" Sprenger | Bubba's | Marion, WI

ABL also thanks its 2017 Annual Meeting sponsors: Bacardi USA, Inc.; Beam Suntory; Brown-Forman; E. & J. Gallo Winery; Infinium Spirits; Milestone Brands, LLC; MillerCoors; National Association of Beverage Importers; The Presidents' Forum of the Distilled Spirits Industry; Serralles USA; Texas Package Stores Association; and Tito's Handmade Vodka.

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About American Beverage Licensees: ABL is the preeminent national trade association for beverage alcohol retailers. Direct retail beverage alcohol sales in the United States generate as many as 1.94 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 \$25.3 billion in federal taxes and \$18.36 billion in state and local taxes. To learn more about ABL, visit www.ablusa.org.