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CONTACT:

Matthew Evans

American Beverage Licensees

301-656-1494

evans@ablusa.org

Annual Meeting Speakers to Provide Insight into Range of Issues Impacting Beverage Retailers

January 26, 2018 – Bethesda, MD – American Beverage Licensees (ABL) announced additional speakers for the 2018 ABL Annual Meeting, to be held March 11-13, 2018 at Harrah's New Orleans Hotel & Casino in New Orleans, Louisiana. Additional announcements are expected in the coming weeks that will build on a program already rich with unique perspectives on a range of issues directly affecting beverage licensees.

“For the past 16 years, ABL has worked diligently to build its annual meeting into the marquee event for independent beverage retailers to learn about new and emerging industry trends, important regulatory and legislative developments, as well as to provide a forum for retailers from across the country to come together to share and network,” said ABL Executive Director John Bodnovich. “We value the opportunity the annual meeting provides to celebrate our industry, relate to one another, and impart valuable information to our members that will help them and their businesses in the years to come.”

Presenters for the 2018 ABL Annual Meeting currently include:

Tom Cole | President & CEO | Republic National Distribution Company | Topic: Keynote Address

Tom Cole has served as the President & CEO of RNDC since its creation in 2006, helping the business grow to be the nation's second largest distributor of wines and spirits with sales of approximately \$6.5 billion. He has been in the wine and spirits industry for over 30 years, having launched his career with Duval Spirits Company in Florida in 1981 and was named President of Magnolia Marketing Company in 1991. He has continued in the chief executive position through several expansions, culminating in the merger of Republic Beverage Company with National Distributing Company. Tom's Keynote Address will cover the future of wholesale distribution in the evolving marketplace.

Elizabeth Frazee | Co-Chair | MIC Coalition | Topic: Music Licensing

Named a “Top Lobbyist” by The Hill newspaper, Elizabeth has a 30-year career in Washington that encompasses over a decade working in high-level jobs on Capitol Hill, executive experience at leading tech and entertainment companies and years of successful representation of companies, trade associations and non-profits as a policy advocate and political strategist. An expert at managing issue campaigns and running industry coalitions, Elizabeth delivers results for her clients by interweaving a thorough understanding of substantive policy, communications, politics and an impressive network of contacts.

Rick Garza | Director | Washington State Liquor & Cannabis Board | Topic: Alcohol & Cannabis Regulation

Rick Garza has been with the Liquor Cannabis Board since 1997. During Rick's career with WSLCB he has also held the positions of Legislative and Tribal Liaison, Policy Director and Deputy Director. Prior to joining the Liquor and Cannabis Board, Rick served 13 years as a staff member for the Washington State Legislature, including five years with the Washington State Senate and eight years with the state House. His legislative assignments included Policy Analyst in the state Senate, House of Representatives Staff Director, and adviser to House and Senate leadership.

Brandy Nannini | VP – Govt. Relations & Traffic Safety | Responsibility.org | Topic: Impaired Driving

As Vice President - Gov. Relations & Traffic Safety, Brandy is responsible for relationships with Members of Congress, State Attorneys General, Federal agencies, governors, state legislators, and agencies, as well as local elected officials. She is also responsible for the organization's public policy efforts including the development and implementation of policy positions. Ms. Nannini also directs the organization's traffic safety programs. Brandy

began her career at the National Office of MADD, where for more than a decade she managed MADD's state and national public policy efforts.

Jim Webster | Managing Partner | Webster Powell P.C. | Topic: Alcohol Legal Update

Jim is the founding partner of Chicago based Webster Powell, P.C., a law firm specializing in the alcohol and hospitality industries. With over 35 years of practice in these industries, Jim represents clients in all three tiers of the industry across the United States. Jim served as the co-chairman of the ABA Committee on Alcoholic Beverages. He has assisted the National Center for Alcohol Law Enforcement in training Wisconsin law enforcement agencies regarding alcohol related incidents and arrests. He was active in the founding and governance of the Chicago Hospitality Resource Partnership, a non-profit resource group that assisted Chicago community neighborhoods in planning, managing and policing hospitality and entertainment districts.

ABL will also honor Mark Brown, President & CEO of Sazerac Company, Inc., as the recipient of the *2018 ABL Top Shelf Award*. The *ABL Top Shelf Award*, the highest honor presented by America's beer, wine and spirits retailers, recognizes those who have demonstrated professional excellence in the beverage alcohol industry and have had a positive influence in their community. The award will be presented at the ABL Honors Gala on March 12, 2018.

Registration for the annual meeting is currently available [online](#) for **\$299** and includes access to all general sessions and hospitality-related events. [Click here](#) to view 2018 ABL Annual Meeting schedule of events. For more information on ABL or the annual meeting, please visit www.ablusa.org.

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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 1.94 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.