ABL *Friday* HAPPY HOUR

July 17, 2026

Welcome to your **ABL Friday Happy Hour** ... *711 words ... 2-3 minutes.* Here's the latest on legislative developments, litigation, and other news affecting beverage alcohol retailers.

1. Common Cents Act Advances to the Senate

ABL welcomed House passage this week of the bipartisan Common Cents Act (**H.R. 3074**), legislation that would establish a uniform national framework for rounding cash transactions to the nearest nickel as the penny is phased out. Ahead of the vote, ABL joined a coalition of national Main Street business organizations urging House leaders to approve the measure, and following passage issued a statement commending the House for advancing "a practical reform" that will provide retailers and consumers with a clear, consistent framework for cash transactions. The bill passed the House by voice vote and now heads to the Senate.

- **Why it matters:** Independent beverage alcohol retailers process millions of cash transactions each year. Without a federal standard, businesses face a growing patchwork of state cash-rounding laws and continued uncertainty as pennies disappear from circulation. ABL is already continuing its work with its retail coalition partners to advance the Common Cents Act in the Senate and establish a consistent national standard for cash transactions.

2. Oregon's Glass Packaging Fees Face Federal Court Challenge

Two national beverage alcohol organizations – the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. (DISCUS) and the Wine Institute – have asked a federal court to strike down portions of Oregon's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law, arguing the state's packaging fee structure unfairly penalizes glass containers while exempting many in-state producers. The groups contend in an amicus brief that Oregon's program disproportionately increases costs for wine and spirits producers and raises constitutional concerns under the Commerce Clause.

- **Why it matters:** While the lawsuit focuses on producer fees, EPR laws and bottle bills increasingly affect the entire beverage alcohol supply chain – including retailers. As more states consider packaging stewardship, recycling mandates, and deposit systems, retailers may face new compliance obligations, operational changes, or higher product costs. ABL continues to monitor these policies because they can directly affect the cost and sale of beverage alcohol products, even when retailers are not the entities paying the initial fees.

3. P.R. Campaign Renews Push for Wine in Grocery Stores in New York

A newly formed public relations campaign, **Cheers for Change**, has launched a drive to overhaul New York's alcohol laws, calling for expanded retail alcohol sales, relaxed tied-house restrictions, changes to longstanding licensing rules, and for grocery stores to sell wine. The coalition argues the proposals would modernize the state's alcohol laws, spur economic growth, and improve consumer convenience.

- **Why it matters:** ABL's three New York affiliates – the **Metropolitan Package Store Association**, **Retailers Alliance of New York**, and the **New York State Liquor Store Association** – have consistently opposed wine-in-grocery proposals, noting that independent liquor stores already provide broad consumer access while supporting local jobs, tax revenue, and community investment. New York is just one example of a familiar national strategy: well-funded campaigns rebranding structural changes to state alcohol laws as "economic development" or "modernization." Similar efforts are annual occurrences in other states, where proposals to expand chain ownership, loosen three-tier safeguards, or authorize grocery alcohol sales are increasingly being marketed as business-friendly reforms rather than fundamental changes to long-established state alcohol regulatory systems. **READ→** Battle Spirals Over New York Wine Sales (*Market Watch*, 7/16/26)

4. CR Through Elections Being Considered; Surface Transportation Bill Slips Until September

House leaders are weighing a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the federal government funded beyond the September 30 fiscal year deadline and potentially through the November elections. At the same time, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) confirmed this week that floor consideration of a long-term surface transportation reauthorization has been delayed until September, leaving lawmakers just weeks to act before current highway and transit programs expire on September 30.

- **Why it matters:** September is shaping up to be one of Congress's busiest legislative months of the year. ABL is tracking the surface transportation bill because it has historically served as the primary vehicle for federal impaired driving policy, including highway safety grants and other alcohol-related traffic safety initiatives. With government funding and transportation reauthorization now on parallel tracks, many policy priorities could ultimately be folded into larger must-pass legislative packages.