ABL Friday HAPPY HOUR

## August 14, 2026

Welcome to your **ABL Friday Happy Hour** ... *955 words* ... *3-4 minutes*. Here's the latest on legislative policy, industry developments, and other news affecting beverage alcohol retailers.

## 1. Hemp Extension Survives Senate Challenge, Included in Final CR

The Senate on August 8 approved a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government through December 11, with a key provision extending the implementation date for the new federal definition of hemp through the same date. The provision survived an effort by Sen. Ted Budd (R-NC) to remove the extension from the funding package, preserving additional time for Congress to develop a responsible regulatory approach to hemp-derived products.

- **Why it matters:** ABL and its members were actively engaged in the effort to preserve the hemp provision, joining beverage industry partners in sending letters to Congress and mobilizing grassroots advocacy urging senators to oppose efforts to strip the extension from the CR. That advocacy helped reinforce the message that Congress needs more time to establish appropriate rules for a regulated hemp beverage marketplace rather than allowing an abrupt federal prohibition to take effect. The work is not finished: the House must still approve the Senate-passed CR when lawmakers return to Washington to fund the government through December 11 and send the hemp extension to the President's desk.

## 2. ABL Supports Bipartisan Beverage Regulatory Parity Act

ABL this week announced its support for the bipartisan Beverage Regulatory Parity Act (H.R. 10079), introduced on August 10 by Reps. Beth Van Duyne (R-TX) and Greg Landsman (D-OH). The legislation would establish a federal regulatory framework for hemp-derived beverages modeled on many of the safeguards that have long governed beverage alcohol, including standards for product safety, testing, labeling, packaging, licensing, taxation, and responsible trade practices. Importantly, the bill preserves states' authority to decide whether and under what conditions hemp beverages may be sold within their borders.

- **Why it matters:** ABL has consistently called for a safe, regulated, and accountable marketplace for hemp beverages rather than an unregulated market or outright prohibition. The Beverage Regulatory Parity Act recognizes the role licensed beverage retailers can play in that system and draws on proven principles of beverage alcohol regulation, including strong state oversight, age verification, product standards, responsible trade practices, and protections against youth access. ABL applauds Reps. Van Duyne and Landsman for advancing a bipartisan approach that provides Congress with a path toward responsible regulation of non-synthetic hemp-derived beverages.

## 3. Common Cents Act Clears Senate; House Action Needed

ABL this week welcomed Senate passage of the bipartisan Common Cents Act (S. 1525), which would establish a uniform federal framework for rounding cash transactions as the penny is phased out. The Senate approved the legislation by unanimous consent on August 7, following House passage of its version of the bill last month. ABL has worked alongside other Main Street business organizations to advance the legislation and thanked Sens. Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) for their bipartisan leadership.

- **Why it matters:** Cash remains an important payment option for independent bars, taverns and package liquor stores. A uniform national standard would give retailers clear rules for handling cash transactions and avoid a patchwork of different state requirements. Because the Senate amended the legislation, the House must now act on the Senate-passed version before it can be sent to the President for signature. ABL is encouraging the House to act promptly so this practical solution can become law.

## 4. Credit Card Competition Act Adds Bipartisan Senate Support

Momentum continues to build for the bipartisan Credit Card Competition Act (CCCA) (H.R. 7035; S. 3623), with Sens. Bernie Moreno (R-OH), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), and Angus King (I-ME) signing on as cosponsors just before the Senate left Washington for its summer recess. The additions bring the Senate coalition behind the bill to three Republicans, two Democrats, and one independent. Importantly, Moreno and Lummis are the first members of the Senate Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction over the legislation, to cosponsor the CCCA.

- **Why it matters:** Credit card and debit card swipe fees hit a record $198.25 billion in 2025 and are most merchants' highest operating cost after labor, driving up prices by more than $1,200 a year for the average family. The new cosponsors add to a string of positive developments for the CCCA, following President Trump's renewed endorsement of the bill and Sen. Dick Durbin's recent call for Congress to "crack down" on swipe fees. ABL has long supported the CCCA to introduce competition into the credit card processing market and provide relief from swipe fees that have become one of Main Street retailers' largest operating expenses. Growing bipartisan support, including now from members of the committee responsible for the bill, adds momentum heading into the fall legislative session.

## 5. Craft Distillers Call for FTC Study of Distribution System

The American Craft Spirits Association (ACSA) is calling on Congress to support a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) study of the U.S. distilled spirits distribution system, citing continued consolidation at the wholesale tier and growing challenges for smaller producers seeking access to market. ACSA wants the FTC to examine competition, market structure, barriers to entry, and the impact of changes in distribution on consumer choice. The proposal was among the priorities craft distillers brought to Capitol Hill during ACSA's recent advocacy efforts.

- **Why it matters:** The call for an FTC study comes as business developments continue to reshape the beverage alcohol wholesale tier. For independent retailers, changes in distribution can affect which products make it to market, the number of wholesalers competing for their business, and ultimately the selection available to consumers. ABL will continue monitoring these types of changes across the industry and efforts to ensure a competitive and healthy marketplace for independent retail licensees.

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