



August 21, 2026

Welcome to your **ABL Friday Happy Hour** ... 840 words ... 3-4 minutes. Here's the latest on legislative policy, industry developments, and other news affecting beverage alcohol retailers.

1. *ABL Insider* Returns with a Fresh Look

This week, ABL officially [relaunched](#) the [ABL Insider](#), the association's quarterly digital publication for members and industry partners. The refreshed Insider brings together ABL advocacy, policy and legal updates, state association news, industry developments, and highlights from across the beverage alcohol retail community in a magazine-style format. The [Summer 2026 issue](#) also looks at ABL's work on hemp and THC policy, federal legislative priorities, the 2026 ABL Annual Meeting, Retailers of the Year, and other issues shaping the marketplace.

- **Why it matters:** The relaunched *ABL Insider* gives members another way to stay connected to ABL's work in Washington and across the states while highlighting the people, businesses, and associations that make up ABL. Published quarterly, the *Insider* will complement ABL's regular communications with a deeper look at the policy, advocacy, legal, and industry issues affecting independent beverage retailers. [Read the Summer 2026 ABL Insider →](#)

2. Save the Date: 2027 ABL Annual Meeting in Louisville

Mark your calendar for the 2027 ABL Annual Meeting, taking place April 17–19, 2027, at the Omni Louisville Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky. ABL members and beverage alcohol industry leaders from across the country will come together for timely policy discussions, industry insights, networking, and recognition of the independent retailers and association leaders who strengthen America's beverage marketplace.

- **Why it matters:** The ABL Annual Meeting is ABL's premier opportunity to bring together beverage retailers, state association leaders, industry partners, and policy experts to discuss the issues shaping the independent retail tier. Registration, hotel information, speakers, and the meeting agenda



will be announced in the months ahead. For now, save the date and make plans to join ABL in Louisville!

3. U.S., Canada Near Trade Deal as 50% Tariff Deadline Looms

The U.S. and Canada appear close to a trade agreement that could avert new 50% tariffs on roughly \$20 billion in Canadian goods scheduled to take effect at 12:01 a.m. Saturday. President Trump delayed the tariffs this week for three days as negotiators work to finalize an agreement, which could also reduce existing U.S. tariffs on Canadian autos, steel and aluminum. Beverage alcohol has emerged as a significant part of the negotiations, with the U.S. pressing Canada to address provincial restrictions that removed American alcohol products from store shelves. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has reportedly asked provincial leaders to restore U.S. alcohol sales if a final agreement is reached.

- **Why it matters:** A deal would avoid potentially significant price increases and further disruption to cross-border trade. An agreement that returns American spirits and wines to Canadian shelves could help break the cycle of retaliation that has shaped beverage businesses on both sides of the border. ABL continues to support the industry's broader Toasts Not Tariffs message: beverage alcohol and hospitality businesses should not be collateral damage in trade disputes, and restoring open markets provides greater certainty for producers, importers, distributors and retailers.

4. Congress Scrutinizes Retailers' Use of Personalized Pricing

Retailers and other companies using so-called "surveillance pricing" technology are drawing increased scrutiny from Congress over how customer data may be used to set individualized prices. Lawmakers have contacted more than 30 companies in the airline, grocery, and ride-share industries seeking information about whether factors such as a customer's location, shopping habits, and demographics influence the prices they see. The issue is attracting bipartisan attention, including from Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) and Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ).

- **Why it matters:** Artificial intelligence and increasingly sophisticated consumer data are giving businesses new ways to tailor prices and promotions, but lawmakers are questioning where personalized marketing ends and potentially discriminatory pricing begins. While the current congressional scrutiny has focused largely on major companies and technology platforms, any new federal restrictions on how consumer data can be used to determine prices could ultimately have broader implications



for retailers, including rules governing loyalty programs, targeted discounts, and personalized promotions.

5. August Recess Offers Opportunity for At-Home Advocacy

With Congress away from Washington for the August district work period, lawmakers are spending more time in their states and districts meeting with constituents, visiting local businesses, and participating in community events. The recess provides beverage retailers and state associations with an opportunity to connect with members of Congress through district office meetings, store and tavern visits, roundtables, and other local events.

- **Why it matters:** Some of the most effective grassroots advocacy happens when lawmakers hear directly from business owners in their home districts. With Congress returning in September to a crowded agenda that includes government funding, hemp regulation, credit card competition, and other issues important to ABL members, now is a good time to strengthen those relationships. ABL encourages members to reach out to their congressional offices during the remaining weeks of the August recess and invite lawmakers to visit their businesses to hear firsthand about the issues facing independent beverage retailers.