September 11, 2026

Welcome to your **ABL Friday Happy Hour** ... *776 words* ... *3-4 minutes*. Here's the latest on legislative policy, industry developments, and other news affecting beverage alcohol retailers.

1. U.S. to Ban Most Canadian Alcohol Imports Beginning September 29

The Trump Administration announced on September 8 that most Canadian beverage alcohol products will be barred from import into the United States beginning September 29, escalating the ongoing U.S.-Canada trade dispute. The action follows months of retaliatory measures, including Canadian provincial restrictions on U.S. alcohol and the imposition of 50% U.S. tariffs on certain Canadian goods. The new prohibition covers a broad range of consumer-packaged Canadian beer, wine and spirits, although some bulk alcohol shipments may continue to enter the U.S. for domestic bottling. It is projected that the ban would affect ~$255.4 million in Canadian spirits imports, representing 86% of total import value and 69% of total import volume.

- **Why it matters:** For beverage retailers, affected products would not be available to replenish inventories once existing U.S. stocks are exhausted. That could mean fewer choices for consumers, disrupted supplier and wholesaler relationships, and added uncertainty heading into the critical holiday season. Canadian whisky is an especially important category, but the effects could extend across beer, wine and spirits portfolios depending on where products are produced and packaged.

2. ABL, WSWA Call for Quick Resolution of Canada Alcohol Dispute

ABL and the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) issued a joint statement on September 9 responding to the U.S. ban on most Canadian alcohol imports. The organizations warned that the action will disrupt supply chains, reduce consumer choice, and create unnecessary uncertainty for beverage businesses preparing for the holiday season. The statement also emphasized that products defined by where they are made cannot necessarily be replaced simply by putting another bottle on the shelf or menu.

- **Why it matters:** ABL and WSWA agree that the Canadian provinces' restrictions on American beverage alcohol should be resolved, but American retailers, wholesalers, hospitality businesses and consumers should not become collateral damage in the dispute. ABL continues to support the two countries finding a negotiated solution that gets U.S. products back on Canadian shelves while keeping Canadian products available to American consumers.
  Read the ABL-WSWA joint statement →

3. Southern Glazer's to Pay $12.5 Million in Federal Trade-Practice Case

Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits has entered into a non-prosecution agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice and agreed to pay $12.5 million to resolve a federal investigation into improper payments and benefits provided to employees of alcohol retailers. According to DOJ and the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB), the conduct included cash, gift cards, travel, golf trips, resort stays and luxury goods used in connection with the promotion, purchase and placement of products, with third-party vendors and false invoices used in some cases to conceal the payments. Southern Glazer's accepted responsibility for the conduct described in the agreement and said it has significantly strengthened its compliance program.

- **Why it matters:** The case is a significant reminder that federal alcohol trade-practice laws are intended to protect a competitive marketplace and prevent retailers from being disadvantaged by improper inducements or pay-to-play arrangements. This case is separate from the FTC's Robinson-Patman Act case against Southern Glazer's, which concerns allegations that large chains received discounts and rebates not made available to smaller independent retailers. That case has been the subject of separate settlement negotiations.
  Read the TTB announcement →
  Read the DOJ announcement →
  Read the non-prosecution agreement →
  Read Southern Glazer's statement →

4. Congress Returns with a Short Runway Before the Midterms

The House and Senate return next week with only a limited amount of legislative time remaining before lawmakers leave Washington to campaign before the November 3 midterm elections. The most immediate government funding fight has already been pushed to December 11, and that same date now looms over the expiration of the temporary extension of the federal hemp definition.

- **Why it matters:** Some ABL priorities could still see action before lawmakers leave town. Final House passage of the Common Cents Act remains a near-term priority after the Senate passed its version unanimously, and supporters of the Combating Organized Retail Crime Act continue to seek a Senate path forward. But larger fights including a hemp regulatory framework, the Credit Card Competition Act, and year-end government funding, are increasingly likely to become part of what could be a very busy post-election lame-duck session. The election results will also matter as control of the House and Senate next year could influence both the willingness of outgoing lawmakers to make deals and the policy calculations surrounding December legislation.