



September 4, 2026

Welcome to your **ABL Friday Happy Hour** ... 952 words ... 3-4 minutes. Here's the latest on legislative policy, industry developments, and other news affecting beverage alcohol retailers.

1. ABL Wishes You a Happy Labor Day

As Americans celebrate Labor Day, ABL recognizes the hard work of the independent beverage retailers who serve their customers and communities every day. For bar, tavern and package liquor store owners – and the employees who keep those businesses running – the summer months can mean long days, busy weekends and countless hours spent making sure customers are well served.

- **Why it matters:** Labor Day marks the traditional end of what we hope has been a busy and successful summer season, and the start for many retailers of the important holiday months. ABL thanks its members for the hard work they put into their businesses, their employees and their communities, as well as their continued commitment to their state associations and ABL. We hope the entire ABL community enjoys a safe, relaxing and well-earned Labor Day weekend.

2. CR Signed into Law; Hemp Deadline Moves to December

President Trump signed a short-term government funding bill Wednesday after the House overwhelmingly approved the Senate-passed measure 370-48, with 19 Republicans and 29 Democrats voting against it. The continuing resolution (CR) keeps the federal government funded through December 11, averting a potential September 30 shutdown and pushing the next funding debate until after the midterm elections. Importantly for beverage retailers, the new law also delays most of the new federal hemp definition from November 12 until December 11, providing another month for Congress and the Administration to consider a regulatory alternative.

- **Why it matters:** The extension provides some short-term certainty for retailers operating in states where hemp-derived beverages are legally sold, allowing most currently lawful products to remain in the market under



existing federal rules through December 11. But this is a reprieve, not a resolution. Without further congressional action, the new federal definition could remove many hemp beverages currently on the market from legal hemp status in December. ABL continues to support a durable regulatory framework that distinguishes responsibly produced and sold hemp beverages from problematic products, protects consumers and youth, and preserves state authority. The focus now shifts to whether Congress can reach such a solution before the new December deadline.

3. Penny Push: Main Street Urges House to Pass Common Cents Act

A broad coalition of 211 national and state trade associations sent a [letter](#) to House leaders Monday urging swift passage of the bipartisan Common Cents Act ([S. 1525](#)). ABL signed the letter along with every ABL state affiliate, joining Main Street business groups in calling on the House to take up the Senate-passed bill and send it to President Trump. The House previously approved its version by voice vote, and the Senate passed S. 1525 by unanimous consent in August, leaving a final House vote as the last legislative step.

- **Why it matters:** With penny production discontinued, retailers need a uniform federal standard for handling cash transactions when exact change is unavailable. The Common Cents Act would provide that certainty and avoid a patchwork of different state approaches. With the House planning to leave Washington earlier than expected this month, ABL and its entire network of state affiliates are making a final push for lawmakers to finish the job before the election recess. [Read the coalition letter](#)

4. Shortened House Schedule Sets Up Busy Lane Duck

House Republican leaders have canceled the final two scheduled weeks of September votes, meaning lawmakers are now expected to leave Washington by September 17 and not return until after the November 3 midterm elections. The decision comes after Congress cleared its biggest immediate deadline by funding the government through December 11. The shortened calendar leaves little time for additional legislative business before Election Day.

- **Why it matters:** For ABL, the compressed calendar increases the importance of the post-election lame-duck session, when several



association priorities could come to a head at once. Congress will face another government funding deadline on December 11, the same date the newly enacted extension of the federal hemp definition expires. ABL is also seeking final House passage of the Common Cents Act; a Senate vote on the Credit Card Competition Act; and final Senate passage of the Combating Organized Retail Crime Act, among other issues. With control of Congress for 2027 determined by the election results, the lame-duck agenda will be shaped by both the politics and the urgency of what could be a consequential final few weeks of the 119th Congress.

5. Retailers Push Senate to Finish Organized Retail Crime Bill

Retail and supply-chain groups are stepping up pressure on the Senate to pass the bipartisan Combating Organized Retail Crime Act (CORCA) ([S. 1404](#)), which cleared the House in May by a 348-60 vote. The legislation would establish a federal Organized Retail Crime Coordination Center within the Department of Homeland Security and strengthen federal tools for pursuing organized theft that crosses jurisdictions. Supporters are pushing for CORCA to be included in the annual defense authorization bill, while civil liberties groups are opposing the measure over concerns about expanded federal law-enforcement authority.

Why it matters: ABL [supports](#) CORCA, alongside organizations including the National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA) and a broad coalition of retailers, wholesalers and supply-chain businesses. Beverage licensees are particularly vulnerable to organized theft because beverage alcohol is a high-value, easily resold product. Sophisticated criminal networks operating across state lines cannot always be effectively addressed by individual local law-enforcement agencies. With only a short Senate work period before lawmakers leave Washington ahead of the midterm elections, the coming weeks may be the best opportunity to get the legislation to the President's desk.