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ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

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Calendar

- June 7-9** Wine Institute Annual Meeting – California
- June 14-17** NCSLA Annual Conference – New Orleans, LA
- June 15-17** Beverage Alcohol Retailers Conference – Minneapolis, MN
- June 15-17** Cheers Beverage Summit – Minneapolis, MN
- July 15-16** Brewers Association Annual Hill Climb – Washington, DC
- July 18-20** Texas Package Stores Association Annual Convention & Trade Show – San Antonio, TX
- July 19-24** Tales of the Cocktail – New Orleans, LA



Let's Get Federal

- [**Merchants Call on OCC to Drop Swipe Fee Rule, Saying Price-Fixing Impact Could Go 'Far Beyond' Credit Cards**](#) – *Merchants Payments Coalition*

The Merchants Payments Coalition urged the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to withdraw a proposed rule that would preempt state swipe-fee reforms, arguing the measure could increase costs for merchants and consumers. The rule is aimed at Illinois' law prohibiting swipe fees on sales taxes and tips, which supporters estimate could save merchants and consumers more than \$500 million annually. Similar legislation is advancing in other states, including Colorado.



Legal & Regulatory News

- [**American Wine Truth in Labeling Bill Advances to CA Senate**](#) – *Wine Industry Advisor*

The California Assembly unanimously approved AB 1585, which would require wine

labeled “American” and sold or bottled in California to be made entirely from American-grown grapes.

- [What Alcohol Manufacturers and Retailers Need to Know About California’s Extended Producer Responsibility and the May 31 Deadline](#) – *BeverageLaw.com*
California’s SB 54 packaging law creates new compliance obligations for alcohol suppliers, importers, wholesalers, brand owners, and some retailers, with producers required to register, comply individually, or seek an exemption by May 31.
- [Is Troubled Whiskey Distiller Uncle Nearest Under Federal Investigation? What We Know](#) – *Lexington Herald-Leader*
A court-appointed receiver disclosed that new counsel had been retained to respond to an unspecified federal investigation involving Uncle Nearest.
- [The Pressure’s Off, but the Push for a Bottle Bill Is Still On This Legislative Session](#) – *Rhode Island Current*
Rhode Island lawmakers continue debating legislation that would establish a beverage container deposit system. Retailers opposing the proposal argue that even if participation in redemption programs remains technically voluntary, competitive pressures could effectively force smaller retailers to participate. Industry opponents also contend the proposed deposit system would increase operating costs and create additional burdens for retailers and consumers.

Cannabis & THC

- [Bars, Liquor Stores in Ohio, Kentucky Hurting as Federal Ban on THC Drink Sales Looms](#) – *WLWT News*
Retailers and bar operators said state restrictions and a looming federal crackdown on hemp-derived THC beverages are already affecting customer traffic and sales, with one Ohio operator urging lawmakers to “regulate it, don’t ban it.”
- [The Biggest Lie the Hemp Beverage Industry Tells Itself](#) – *Cantrip Guy*
A hemp beverage founder argued the industry should stop treating regulation as an existential threat and instead embrace clearer rules as necessary for long-term legitimacy, retail access, and consumer trust.
- [Rhode Island Governor Picks New Chair for Cannabis Control Commission](#) – *Marijuana Moment*

Gov. Dan McKee nominated Michelle Reddish to chair Rhode Island's Cannabis Control Commission as the state continues defending its cannabis licensing process against federal challenges involving residency requirements.

Tariff Talk

- [**Bourbon's Global Soft Power Is Fading as Trump Tariffs Reshape the Industry**](#) – *VinePair*
American whiskey exports reportedly fell 19% in 2025, with sharp declines in Canada, the European Union, and Japan as tariffs, geopolitical tensions, and changing consumer sentiment continue pressuring bourbon abroad.
 - [**India Alleges Pernod Ricard Withheld Scotch Composition, Age in Effort to Pay Lower Tariffs**](#) – *Reuters*
Indian authorities allege Pernod Ricard undervalued Scotch whisky imports and owes more than \$300 million in back taxes, while the company denies wrongdoing and says it will challenge the findings.
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Associate Member Spotlight



Beer Institute

The Beer Institute, based in Washington, D.C., represents the \$471 billion beer industry and the more than 2.42 million American jobs supported by brewing, distribution, retail, and related sectors. Founded in 1862 and reorganized as the Beer Institute in 1986, the organization represents brewers, beer importers, and industry suppliers before Congress, federal agencies, state legislatures, and public forums nationwide. The Beer Institute serves as a leading source of industry information and advocates for sound public policy, personal responsibility, and community engagement across the brewing sector. [**Visit the Beer Institute »**](#)

Industry News

- [**April 2026 Control States Results**](#) – *NABCA*
Control state spirits sales declined in April, with 9L volume down 1.2% and dollar volume down 3.9%, while wine volume fell 4.1%; cocktails driven by canned RTDs and tequila continued to show relative strength.

- [May BPI Remains in Expansion](#) – *National Beer Wholesalers Association*
As America’s beer distributors prepare for the summer selling season, the combined index readings for BPI (52) and at-risk inventory (39) — the lowest mark since 2021 — keep the industry in expansionary territory. The May BPI reading of 52 is the third consecutive month at or above 50 and a seven-point increase from May 2025.
 - [Alcohol Distributor Plans to Lay Off 267 in Washington](#) – *Seattle Times*
RNDC disclosed potential layoffs tied to facilities in Seattle, Auburn, Everett, and Spokane as part of broader restructuring and potential sales of distribution operations.
 - [Boisset Collection Announces Distribution Alignment with Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits and U.S. Sales Force Expansion](#) – *The Tasting Panel*
Boisset announced a national distribution agreement with Southern Glazer’s across 26 markets and said it plans to expand its U.S. sales force, signaling continued fine wine supplier realignment.
 - [Wente Family Estates Aligns Leadership and Distribution Strategy for Expansion with Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits](#) – *Wine Industry Advisor*
Wente Family Estates expanded its Southern Glazer’s alignment into four additional states as wine suppliers continue seeking greater route-to-market focus and national execution.
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Business

- [2026’s “Explosive Start” Has Already “Fizzled;” Spirits Remain Lone Bright Spot, per Circana Weekly Scans](#) – *Brewbound (\$)*
Circana reported off-premise beverage alcohol dollar sales fell 0.6% and volume declined 2.4% during the week ending May 17, with spirits the only major category posting dollar and volume growth.
- [Too Big to Ignore: How Should Spirits Companies Target the RTD Opportunity?](#) – *IWSR*
IWSR said RTDs remain one of the few global beverage alcohol growth engines, with spirits-based RTDs continuing to grow while malt-based products decline and brand owners focus more selectively on occasion, price, format, and route-to-market strategy.

- [Why Owning the Moment Wins in a Changing Alcohol Market](#) – *Boston Consulting Group*
BCG argued that winning beverage alcohol brands are increasingly built around specific consumption occasions, with RTDs, non-alcoholic beer, and single-serve formats benefiting from shifts toward convenience and casual at-home drinking.
 - [NIQ: How Moderation Is Reshaping Global Bev-Alc Sales](#) – *Brewbound (\$)*
NIQ reported no/low alcohol has reached \$6 billion in global off-premise sales, while 63% of consumers globally say they are moderating alcohol consumption in some form.
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Industry Econ

- [AB InBev Posts First Quarterly Sales Gain in Three Years](#) – *Vinetur*
AB InBev reported first-quarter revenue growth of 5.8%, with no-alcohol beer revenue up 27% and Beyond Beer revenue up 37%.
 - [Heineken Prepares for CEO Departure With No New Head Lined Up](#) – *Global Drinks Intel*
Heineken said its CEO succession search is still underway as Dolf van den Brink prepares to step down, with no interim CEO appointment planned.
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E-Commerce & DTC

- [Winery Direct-to-Consumer Shipment Value Falls Again in April](#) – *Wine Business (\$)*
April winery DTC shipment value fell nearly 2% while volume declined nearly 13%, continuing a broader pattern in which higher average bottle prices mask weaker shipment volume.
 - [Can DoorDash Cut You Off From Ordering Alcohol?](#) – *BroBible*
A viral post claimed DoorDash removed a customer's ability to order alcohol after a high number of alcohol orders, highlighting broader questions around platform-based alcohol delivery, monitoring, and compliance.
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ABL Member Benefit



ServSafe Alcohol

American Beverage Licensees (ABL) and the National Restaurant Association have partnered to provide ABL members and their state affiliate members discounted ServSafe Alcohol training and certification. Created by the National Restaurant Association, ServSafe Alcohol is a dynamic, skills-based training program designed to help prevent intoxication, drunk driving, and underage sales. The program offers convenient web-based server and seller training, providing industry-recognized instruction and certification for beverage alcohol employees.

Use code “ABLUSA” to save 20% on training. [Get started with ServSafe Alcohol »](#)

States

- **AL: [Falkville Alcohol Vote in Limbo as Ineligible Ballot Clouds Results](#) – WAFF**
A one-vote municipal election to end Falkville, Alabama’s 140-year alcohol sales ban remains unresolved after officials discovered an ineligible ballot was cast.
- **MD: [Maryland Bill Allows To-Go Cocktails in Baltimore County](#) – CBS News**
Gov. Wes Moore signed legislation allowing certain Baltimore County bars and restaurants to sell sealed cocktails to-go beginning July 1, subject to local licensing board rules.
- **NY: [New York No Longer Requesting Information on Dancing in Liquor License Application](#) – NY1**
The New York State Liquor Authority will no longer ask liquor license applicants whether patrons will be allowed to dance, eliminating what Gov. Kathy Hochul called an “antiquated restriction” on hospitality businesses.
- **NC: [Forget Vodka. In Mecklenburg County, There’s a New Top Drink for ABC Store Sales](#) – The Charlotte Observer (\$)**
Mecklenburg County ABC sales dipped slightly but profits remained strong, while tequila brands claimed six of the top 10 product rankings and Don Julio Reposado displaced Tito’s as the county’s top-selling item.
- **NC: [North Carolina Proposal Would Allow Premixed Cocktails in Grocery Stores](#) – WRAL**
North Carolina lawmakers advanced a proposal allowing certain canned cocktails up

to 10% ABV to be sold outside ABC stores, drawing support from retailers and opposition from control-state stakeholders.

- **OH: [Ohio Nightlife On Alert As Senators Push Bar Test Strips To Catch Spiked Drinks](#) – Hoodline**
Ohio lawmakers are considering legislation that would require bars to make drink-spiking test strips available to patrons. Supporters say the measure would improve consumer safety, while industry representatives have raised concerns about supply availability and implementation logistics.
 - **UT: [To Keep Utah Communities from Going “Dry,” DABS Reworks Liquor Store Contracts](#) – FOX 13**
Utah’s Department of Alcoholic Beverage Services approved a new consignment model for package agencies, allowing contractors to pay for products after sale in an effort to stabilize liquor access in rural communities.
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International

- **[Report Recommends Warning Labels on Booze as B.C. Alcohol Use Above National Levels](#) – CBC News**
British Columbia’s provincial health officer recommended alcohol warning labels, minimum pricing changes based on alcohol content, and a provincial alcohol strategy.
- **[Dutch Breweries Expand Into Soft Drinks as Beer Consumption Declines](#) – NL Times**
Breweries in the Netherlands and across Europe are expanding into soft drinks and alcohol-free beverages as beer consumption declines and consumers shift toward no- and low-alcohol options.
- **[Ireland Government Opposing Bill to Restrict Zero Alcohol Drinks Advertisements](#) – RTE**
Ireland’s government is opposing legislation that would restrict zero-alcohol drink advertising, arguing the issue requires further evidence review given both substitution benefits and concerns about indirect alcohol brand promotion.

- [Nova Scotia Announces Strict New Rules for Bar Security Staff](#) – *Haligonian.ca*
Nova Scotia will require bar security staff to complete criminal record checks, security training, and responsible alcohol service training under new liquor regulations.
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Back Bar

- [The Cocktail Ingredients You're Overpaying For — and What Bartenders Use Instead](#) – *VinePair*
With consumers increasingly looking for ways to stretch their budgets, bartenders say some commonly purchased cocktail ingredients can be replaced with lower-cost alternatives without sacrificing quality. The article highlights practical substitutions and cost-saving strategies that can help both home enthusiasts and hospitality operators manage rising expenses.
 - [The Wine Industry's Gen Z Problem Isn't What You Think](#) – *The Drinks Business*
The article argues wine's challenge with younger consumers may be less about abstention and more about complexity, intimidation, and a lack of accessible entry points.
 - [Can Alcohol Expire? The Answer Depends on What's in Your Cabinet](#) – *Southern Living*
A practical consumer guide explains how shelf life varies across beer, wine, spirits, liqueurs, and fortified wines, with storage conditions and whether a bottle has been opened playing major roles.
 - [Scotch Whisky Wants Luxury Prices. Where Is the Luxury Experience?](#) – *Forbes*
The piece argues Scotch brands have leaned into luxury pricing without building enough high-profile retail and experiential spaces in major cities to support that positioning.
 - [Oregon Nonalcoholic Beverage Category Takes Off as Alcohol Sales Slow](#) – *Portland Business Journal (\$)*
Oregon wineries, bars, and beverage makers are expanding nonalcoholic offerings as moderation trends reshape hospitality, tasting room traffic, and customer experience.
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American Beverage Licensees is the preeminent national trade association for beverage alcohol retailers. Direct retail beverage alcohol sales in the United States generate more than **2.03 million well-paying jobs**. ABL's thousands of on-premise and off-premise licensee members are independent and often family-owned establishments. The beverage retailing industry pays over **\$27.9 billion** in federal taxes and **\$20.0 billion** in state and local taxes. To learn more about ABL, visit www.ablusa.org.

American Beverage Licensees

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