

A PUBLICATION OF AMERICAN BEVERAGE LICENSEES

ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

Issue 551 | June 7, 2026



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

- [**Illinois, Colorado Lead the Way on Swipe Fee Reform**](#) – *The Hill*
A new opinion piece argues that Illinois and Colorado have become the leading state battlegrounds over swipe fees charged on the tax and tip portions of credit and debit card transactions. The piece frames swipe-fee reform as a direct cost issue for Main Street businesses and consumers, while warning that federal preemption efforts could undermine state-level reforms.
- [**Banks, Card Networks Get Ruling Blocking Illinois Swipe Fee Law**](#) – *Bloomberg Law* (\$)
A federal judge ruled that national banks, federal savings associations, and payment card networks do not have to comply with Illinois' law barring interchange fees on the tax and gratuity portions of retail transactions. The ruling is a significant setback for the first-in-the-nation law and adds urgency to broader merchant efforts to advance swipe-fee reform.

- [Businesses Call for Senate Passage of Retail Crime Bill](#) – *U.S. Chamber of Commerce*

Retailers, manufacturers, transportation providers, and supply-chain stakeholders are urging the Senate to advance House-passed legislation establishing a federal coordination center to combat organized retail and supply-chain crime. The push follows House passage of H.R. 2853 and highlights risks to frontline employees, transportation workers, retailers, and communities that rely on the secure movement of goods.

Legal & Regulatory

- [Maryland's Beer Delivery Case Shows Why "Employee Delivery" May Not Save Discriminatory Alcohol Shipping Laws](#) – *Libation Law Blog*

The pending Fourth Circuit appeal in *Furlong v. Brown* is drawing attention because it tests whether states can create alcohol delivery privileges that appear neutral but are practically usable only by local producers. The analysis argues that Maryland's employee-delivery requirement may create a special barrier to out-of-state breweries and could have broader implications for direct delivery, self-distribution, and manufacturer-parity laws.

- [Alcohol Tax Amendments May Be Unconstitutional](#) – *The Center Square*
Illinois officials are seeking to update alcohol tax definitions, but the Tax Foundation warned that the proposed amendments could invite legal challenges under the state constitution's uniformity clause. The analysis argues Illinois' alcohol tax structure remains unnecessarily complex and that a tax based on alcohol content would be a more modern and consistent approach.
-

Industry

- [National Layoffs by Alcohol Distributor Hit Charlotte, Raleigh](#) – *Business North Carolina*

Republic National Distributing Company will close operations in Charlotte and Raleigh, affecting 53 employees, as the company continues restructuring and selling operations in multiple markets. The closures follow Reyes Beverage Group's acquisition of RNDC operations in several states and Washington, D.C.

- [Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits Set for Name Change](#) – *Global Drinks Intel*
Southern Glazer's plans to become Southern Glazer's Beverage Co. as it expands further into beer, RTDs, non-alcohol, and other beverage categories. Company leaders

said the name change reflects a broader total-beverage strategy, with more than 60 million cases expected across beer, RTD, and non-alcohol categories.

- [**RTDs Overtake Vodka in Global Value**](#) – *The Spirits Business*
RTDs have reportedly overtaken vodka in global value, marking a significant milestone for one of beverage alcohol's fastest-growing categories and reinforcing the category's importance for shelf space, innovation, and route-to-market strategy.
- [**Draft Nearly 10% of 2025 Beer Volume, Highest Level Since COVID-19 Pandemic, per Beer Institute Packaging Mix Report**](#) – *Brewbound (\$)*
Beer Institute data show draft beer accounted for 9.6% of U.S. beer volume in 2025, its highest share since 2019, while aluminum cans remained the dominant beer package at 63.4%. The report ties draft recovery to continued growth at restaurants, bars, taprooms, and other in-person venues.
- [**Uncle Nearest Finds Buyer**](#) – *The Spirits Business*
The receiver for Uncle Nearest has entered a non-binding letter of intent to sell the brand and Nearest Green Distillery assets to a confidential buyer. The proposed buyer said it intends to maintain the current workforce and honor the cultural significance of the Uncle Nearest brand.

Cannabis & THC

- [**Sweeping Changes Coming to TN Hemp Industry on July 1**](#) – *The Lynchburg Times*
Tennessee's hemp-derived cannabinoid market will shift to Alcoholic Beverage Commission oversight on July 1, with sales limited to 21-and-older licensed establishments and online sales, vending-machine sales, home delivery, and general retail sales prohibited. The new framework effectively removes many high-potency THCA products from the market and brings hemp oversight closer to alcohol regulation.
- [**Virginia Cannabis Commission Holds First Hearing Following Governor's Veto of Bill to Legalize Recreational Sales**](#) – *Marijuana Moment*
Virginia lawmakers are continuing to examine options for establishing a regulated adult-use cannabis retail market after Gov. Abigail Spanberger vetoed legalization legislation. Supporters say the state's current framework allows possession and limited home cultivation while leaving retail sales illegal and unregulated.

- [North Carolina Officials Raise Concerns About Marijuana-Impaired Driving Enforcement](#) – *WRAL News*
Officials advising North Carolina on cannabis policy warned that the state lacks reliable roadside impairment testing and has a limited number of Drug Recognition Experts. The discussion underscores the enforcement and public-safety challenges states face when considering regulated cannabis markets.
 - [WVABCA Expands Enforcement Efforts Under New Vape Safety Act](#) – *Parsons Advocate*
The West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration is expanding licensing, compliance, and enforcement responsibilities for qualifying vape and smoke shops under the state's new Vape Safety Act. The law builds on prior oversight of Delta-8, hemp, and kratom products and gives WVABCA additional tools to address youth-marketed and improperly labeled products.
-

Tariff Talk

- [Wine Institute Delegation Presses for Urgent Action to Return U.S. Wine to Canadian Shelves](#) – *Wine Institute*
Wine Institute said Canadian provincial bans on U.S. alcohol have kept American wine out of what had been its largest export market for more than a year. The delegation also raised concerns in Washington about USDA programs and the spread of unregulated THC hemp products.
 - [France Approves a “Hidden Tariff” on EU Wines and Food Products](#) – *Vinetur*
France's National Assembly gave initial approval to an emergency agriculture bill that would restrict some food imports, require public cafeterias to source more French products, and create minimum prices in farm negotiations. Critics say the measure could conflict with European Union free-trade rules and affect food and wine sourcing across the bloc.
-

Associate Member Spotlight

National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA)

The National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA) represents America's 3,000 independent beer distributors who service every state, congressional district and media market across the country. Licensed at the federal and state levels, beer distributors get bottles, cans, cases and kegs from a brewer or importer to stores, restaurants and other licensed retail accounts through a transparent and accountable regulatory system. [Visit NBWA »](#)

Business

- [Spirits & Beer Led YoY Declines at Start of Memorial Day Weekend, per NIQ Weekly Scans](#) – *Brewbound (\$)*
NIQ reported total beverage alcohol dollar sales fell 4.7% and volume declined 6.5% in the four weeks ending May 23. Spirits led dollar sales declines, beer led volume losses, wine remained negative but slightly improved, and spirits-based RTDs continued to grow sharply.
- [Major Revisions to the Brewers Association's 2025 Industry Production Report](#) – *The New School*
The Brewers Association revised its 2025 craft production data, showing craft beer production fell 4.0% rather than 5.1%, market share increased to 13.4%, retail value declined 2.8%, and employment losses were smaller than previously reported.
- [The State of Tequila in North America in 2026 – Category Intel](#) – *Global Drinks Intel*
The tequila category is entering a more mature phase as U.S. volumes flatten, premium segments soften, and retailers become more selective. The report says celebrity branding is losing power as consumers focus more on authenticity, transparency, price, and production stories.
- [Spirits Stabilize in April as Alcohol Market Heads Into Summer](#) – *Park Street*
SipSource data showed April alcohol trends moderated after an unusually strong March, with spirits offering the strongest signs of stabilization. Premiumization remained under pressure as consumers traded down, while vodka narrowed its

volume decline and select wine segments including Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir showed improvement.

- **[Treasury Wine Estates to Reshape Portfolio Around “Fewer, Stronger Brands”](#)** –

The Grocer

Treasury Wine Estates said it will reduce its portfolio from 76 brands to fewer than 30 and concentrate investment behind Penfolds, DAOU, Matua, and several regional brands. The company said premiumization, lighter styles, and moderation trends are reshaping global wine demand.

E-Commerce & DTC

- **[Gopuff Launches AI-Based Personal Shopping Assistant](#)** – *Axios Pro (\$)*

Instant delivery platform Gopuff is launching an AI-powered personal shopping assistant using Grok technology to help consumers build carts and discover products. The move highlights how digital retailers and delivery platforms are using AI to influence product discovery, basket size, and online purchasing behavior.

- **[Scotch Raises \\$20 Million Series A to Modernize Liquor Retail Operations](#)** – *Pulse 2.0*

Scotch says its AI-first retail operating system is designed for liquor stores managing thousands of SKUs across dozens of distributors. The platform automates invoice matching, cost updates, inventory workflows, and analytics for independent beverage alcohol retailers.

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 Will Allow Alcohol Sales After Review Finds Unqualified Ballot Didn't Affect Outcome](#)** – *WHNT News*
Falkville, Alabama certified a narrow vote to allow alcohol sales after officials reviewed an unqualified ballot and determined it did not change the outcome. Alcohol sales and distribution will become legal once the town adopts implementing ordinances.
 - **FL: [Major Tampa Alcohol Distribution Facility Sells for \\$29.7M](#)** – *Tampa Bay Business & Wealth*
Reyes Beverage Group acquired a 349,299-square-foot Tampa distribution facility from RNDK as part of its takeover of RNDK's Florida operations, placing a major Tampa alcohol-distribution hub under new ownership.
 - **KY: [Whiskey House of Kentucky Layoffs Impact Employees at Elizabethtown Facility](#)** – *WDRB*
Whiskey House of Kentucky laid off 22 employees, about 30% of its workforce, as the contract distiller operates at roughly 60% capacity amid slower spirits demand.
 - **LA: [Louisiana Increases Penalties for Repeat DWI Convictions](#)** – *KQKI News*
Louisiana enacted Act 117, increasing penalties for certain repeat DWI offenders and raising the minimum prison term for some fourth-offense convictions from one year to 12 years beginning August 1.
 - **MD: [Maryland Clarifies Pomace Brandy Tax Rules](#)** – *Vinetur*
Maryland's new law expands the definition of pomace brandy that may be produced by Class 4 limited wineries and clarifies that the product must be reported as a distilled spirit for tax purposes.
 - **NC: [Bill Nixes Sunday Alcohol Sales, Makes Other ABC Changes](#)** – *North State Journal*
North Carolina lawmakers advanced a broad ABC bill affecting RTDs, mixed-beverage rules, event permits, mobile bars, social districts, ABC Commission governance, and small-producer tax credits.
-

International

- [**Pub Sales of Weak Beer Rocket After Tax Raid**](#) – *The Telegraph* (\$) Sales of lower-strength beer in the United Kingdom have surged since duty reforms created incentives for products at 3.4% ABV or below. The British Beer and Pub Association said lower-strength beers now account for more than one in eight pints sold, while critics argue large brewers are better positioned than smaller producers to reformulate and capture the tax benefit.
 - [**Rival Stouts Try to Persuade British Drinkers to Look Beyond Guinness**](#) – *Financial Times* (\$) Rival stout brands are trying to capture share from Guinness as the category grows in the United Kingdom, especially among younger consumers. Murphy's, Beamish, and Hawkstone Black are expanding as pubs weigh whether to add a second stout tap or stay focused on Guinness.
 - [**Germany's Drinks Industry Forms a Single National Lobby Group**](#) – *Vinetur* Germany's wine, sparkling wine, and spirits sectors have agreed to merge three trade groups into one national association, giving the industry a unified voice on alcohol policy, labeling, taxation, sustainability, packaging, and trade issues.
-

Back Bar

- [**The Drink of Summer Is Looking Bright, Bubbly, and a Little Predictable**](#) – *Observer* Spritzes and bright, bubbly, lower-ABV cocktails continue to define summer drinking occasions, reflecting consumer interest in approachable, photogenic, and lighter beverage options.
 - [**Why Drinking Alcohol May Make You Reach for Chips and Pizza**](#) – *Medical Xpress* University of Sydney researchers found that alcohol may activate biological pathways that increase savory cravings, helping explain why consumers often reach for chips, pizza, fries, and other salty foods after drinking.
 - [**Top Tips to Avoid Trademark Infringement at the 2026 World Cup**](#) – *Beverage Daily* Beverage brands and retailers preparing World Cup promotions are being reminded to avoid unauthorized uses of protected marks, logos, team names, and event branding when creating marketing campaigns.
-

About ABL

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

5101 River Rd., Suite 108, Bethesda, MD 20816

Phone: (301) 656-1494

www.ABLUSA.org

If you would like to unsubscribe: [click here](#)