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ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

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Calendar

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| July 18-20 | Texas Package Stores Association Annual Convention & Trade Show – San Antonio, TX |
| July 19-24 | Tales of the Cocktail – New Orleans, LA |
| July 21-22 | American Craft Spirits Association Legislative Fly-In – Washington, DC |
| August 10 | The Retailers Alliance Foundation of New York 57th Annual Golf Outing – East Norwich, NY |
| August 18-19 | American Distilling Institute Conference – Miami Beach, FL |
| August 24-26 | Center for Alcohol Policy Alcohol Law & Policy Conference – Minneapolis, MN |
| September 17-18 | WSWA Women’s Leadership Conference – Washington, DC |
| September 20-22 | Illinois Licensed Beverage Association Convention & Trade Show – Springfield, IL |
| September 21-23 | Montana Tavern Association Annual Trade Show & Convention – Anaconda, MT |
| September 28-29 | WSWA Annual Membership Forum – Chicago, IL |
| October 4-8 | Tavern League of Wisconsin Fall Convention & Trade Show – Wisconsin Dells, WI |
| October 4-8 | Wine & Spirits Guild of America Meeting – Willamette Valley, OR |
| October 8 | 43rd Annual Market Watch Leaders Awards Banquet – New York, NY |
| October 11-14 | NBWA 89th Annual Convention & Product Showcase – Orlando, FL |
| October 13 | New York State Liquor Store Association Holiday Trade Show – Albany, NY |

October 13-14	BREW & Alliance for Women in Beer: Making Moves – Orlando, FL
October 15	New York State Liquor Store Association Holiday Trade Show – Buffalo, NY
October 19-20	Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. Legislative & Board Meeting – Washington, DC
October 19-20	Tennessee Wine & Spirits Retailers Association Annual Conference – Nashville, TN
October 26	Metropolitan Package Store Association Annual Dinner – Howard Beach, NY
October 28	New Jersey Liquor Stores Association Trade Show – Edison, NJ
November 2	The Retailers Alliance Foundation of New York 56th Annual Dinner Dance – Chelsea Piers, NY

Let's Get Federal

- [Court Approves Swipe Fee Settlement, Merchants Still Push For Reform](#) – *Restaurant Business***
 A federal judge approved a roughly \$38 billion settlement in long-running litigation over Visa and Mastercard interchange fees, but merchant groups say the agreement fails to address the underlying lack of competition in the payments marketplace. Retail and restaurant advocates argue that legislative reforms such as the Credit Card Competition Act remain necessary to reduce swipe fees and provide meaningful relief for businesses that continue to face rising payment processing costs.
- [CHEERS Act Introduced In Senate](#) – *Quiver Quantitative***
 Sen. Tim Sheehy introduced the Creating Hospitality Economic Enhancement for Restaurants and Servers Act, legislation that would classify certain energy-efficient draft alcohol property as 15-year property for depreciation purposes. The proposal would apply to stainless steel or aluminum containers and commercial tap equipment used in restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues, potentially helping operators recover the cost of draft system investments more quickly.
- [NBWA Launches Stolen Alcohol Resource Center](#) – *NBWA***
 The National Beer Wholesalers Association launched a Stolen Alcohol Resource Center designed to help distributors, retailers, and law enforcement combat cargo theft, product diversion, and organized retail crime. The initiative comes as supply chain theft continues to affect beverage alcohol businesses nationwide

and complements broader efforts to strengthen enforcement, information sharing, and industry coordination.

Legal & Regulatory

- [**TTB Clarifies When Kombucha Falls Under Federal Alcohol Rules**](#) – *Vinetur*
TTB updated its guidance on kombucha, clarifying that products containing more than 0.5% alcohol by volume are regulated as alcohol beverages. Depending on ingredients, production methods, and alcohol content, hard kombucha may be classified as beer, wine, or distilled spirits, triggering different federal labeling, formula, tax, and compliance obligations. The guidance is especially relevant as fermented beverages and alcohol alternatives continue to blur category lines.
 - [**Restaurants Accused Of Violating Credit Card Receipt Privacy Rules**](#) – *Law360 (\$)*
A proposed class action filed in Massachusetts alleges that a restaurant operator violated the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act by printing too many credit card digits on customer receipts. FACTA generally prohibits businesses from printing more than the last five digits of a card number on electronically printed receipts. The case is a reminder for retailers and hospitality operators to confirm that point-of-sale systems are properly truncating card information.
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Industry

- [**Spec's Expands To Nevada With Lee's Discount Liquor Acquisition**](#) – *Shanken News Daily (\$)*
Spec's Wines, Spirits & Finer Foods is making its first move outside Texas with an agreement to acquire Lee's Discount Liquor, Nevada's largest independent liquor chain. Lee's will retain its name and continue operating independently following the transaction. The deal brings together two well-known family retail businesses and reflects continued consolidation among large independent beverage alcohol retailers.
- [**Suppliers Rethink Distribution Strategy After RNDC Collapse**](#) – *Vinetur*
A Rabobank report says the fallout from RNDC's exit from California and liquidation across dozens of states is accelerating a major shift in U.S. wine and spirits distribution. Many suppliers are moving away from broad national alignment deals and toward a "best athlete" model that selects distributors state by state based on execution, economics, and local fit. The disruption highlights

the risks of relying too heavily on a single wholesaler and may force brands to rebuild more of their own sales and distributor-management capabilities.

- [**Anheuser-Busch Invests \\$20 Million In St. Louis And Missouri Facilities**](#) – *PR Newswire*

Anheuser-Busch announced more than \$20 million in investments in its St. Louis and Missouri operations, including projects tied to Michelob Ultra production, brewery improvements, and workforce development. The announcement is part of the company's broader commitment to U.S. manufacturing and local economic growth and signals continued supplier investment behind core beer brands despite broader category headwinds.

- [**Diageo Restructuring Accelerates Under New CEO**](#) – *Drinks Ireland*

Diageo is preparing a major restructuring under CEO Dave Lewis as the owner of Guinness, Johnnie Walker, and Smirnoff looks to cut costs and respond to weaker global spirits demand. Reports suggest the company is reassessing headcount, operating structure, pricing, and portfolio focus, including greater emphasis on ready-to-drink products and more accessible price points.

Cannabis & THC

- [**National Restaurant Association Urges Congress To Regulate, Not Ban, Hemp THC Drinks**](#) – *Cannabis Business Times*

The National Restaurant Association is urging Congress to delay the scheduled November federal ban on many hemp-derived THC products and instead create a regulated framework for hemp THC beverages. The association says some restaurants already serve these products and that consumer demand is growing, particularly among guests seeking a social beverage experience without alcohol. The group supports federal standards for age verification, production, quality assurance, labeling, dosing disclosures, and operational rules.

- [**GOP Lawmaker Circulates Bill To Keep Hemp THC Beverages Federally Legal**](#) – *Marijuana Moment*

Rep. Beth Van Duyne is circulating draft legislation that would allow hemp-derived THC beverages with up to 5 milligrams of delta-9 THC per serving to remain legal under federal law. The draft would place the products under TTB oversight, impose a federal tax, require permits for manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and sellers, and preserve state authority to impose stricter standards.

- [Cannabis Branding Still Entices Youth Despite Packaging Laws](#) – *Mirage News*
A Washington State University study found that many teens and young adults viewed compliant cannabis edible packaging as appealing to people under 21. Participants highlighted colorful logos, brand names, bold typography, and food-like images even when products met state packaging rules. The findings raise questions about whether existing restrictions adequately address youth appeal and may inform future labeling, marketing, and packaging standards.
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Tariff Talk

- [Trump Renews 100% Tariff Threat On French Wine And Champagne](#) – *Reuters*
President Trump renewed his threat to impose 100% tariffs on French wine and Champagne unless France drops its digital services tax on large U.S. technology companies. French President Emmanuel Macron said France would not bend to the pressure, while wine and spirits exporters warned that alcohol producers risk becoming collateral damage in a dispute unrelated to their industry. For U.S. retailers, any tariff escalation would likely increase costs, disrupt inventories, and add uncertainty to pricing and purchasing decisions.
 - [Wine Tariff Threat May Be More Serious This Time](#) – *Wine-Searcher*
Wine-Searcher's W. Blake Gray argues that the latest French wine tariff threat may be more legally durable than prior tariff threats because it could proceed through a Section 301 trade case tied to France's digital services tax. The analysis notes that the U.S. Trade Representative has authority to respond to discriminatory foreign trade practices and could target French wine even though tariffs would also hurt U.S. importers, retailers, and restaurants.
 - [American Whiskey Association Pushes For India Market Access](#) – *American Whiskey Association*
The American Whiskey Association says a potential U.S.-India trade framework could represent a major long-term opportunity for American whiskey. India is the world's largest whiskey market by volume, but tariffs and state-level rules have limited commercially meaningful access for imported spirits. AWA is urging negotiators to prioritize fair competition, tariff reduction, and practical access to bars, restaurants, retailers, and consumers.
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Associate Member Spotlight



Breakthru Beverage Group

Breakthru Beverage Group is one of North America's leading beverage alcohol wholesalers, operating across the United States and Canada. Formed through the combination of several long-standing family-owned distribution businesses, Breakthru represents many of the world's leading wine, spirits, beer, and non-alcohol beverage brands. The company serves retail and on-premise customers while investing in logistics, technology, category management, market execution, and industry education. Through its national scale and local market expertise, Breakthru plays an important role connecting suppliers, retailers, and consumers throughout the three-tier system. [Visit Breakthru »](#)

Business

- [**NIQ: Alcohol Sales Remain Under Pressure Entering Summer**](#) – *NIQ*
NIQ reported that total beverage alcohol dollar sales declined 4.4% and case volume fell 5.9% during the four weeks ending June 6. Prepared cocktails were the only major category to post dollar growth, while spirits, beer, and wine remained below year-ago levels. The data suggests the industry continues to face pressure heading into key summer selling occasions, including the World Cup and July Fourth.
- [**World Cup Delivers Early Boost For Beer Sales**](#) – *Brewbound (\$)*
BeerBoard data from the first weekend of the FIFA World Cup showed a strong on-premise lift, with draft beverage alcohol revenue up nearly 17% year over year and packaged revenue up nearly 25%. Imports gained share, lagers dominated, and Michelob Ultra benefited as the official beer sponsor. The early results offer a welcome positive signal for beer heading into summer.
- [**Digital Influence Rises, But Consumers Still Trust People Over AI**](#) – *The Drinks Business*
New research from Chelsea Co. found that digital channels are increasingly important in drinks discovery, especially among younger consumers, but human recommendations remain highly influential. The study found that 43% of consumers discover alcoholic drinks in store and 42% through friends and family, reinforcing the value of knowledgeable staff, in-store merchandising, tastings, and real-world recommendations.

- [**Rising Labor Costs Continue To Pressure New York Hospitality Operators**](#) – *Vital City*

A Vital City analysis examines how rising minimum wages and labor costs are affecting New York City restaurants. Operators say higher wage mandates, food inflation, rent, insurance, and other costs are forcing difficult decisions around pricing, staffing, service models, and expansion. While the piece focuses on New York, the broader lesson applies nationally to independent restaurants, bars, and hospitality businesses.

- [**Independent Restaurant Coalition Releases Auto-Gratuity Guidance**](#) – *Independent Restaurant Coalition*

The Independent Restaurant Coalition released a practical FAQ on automatic gratuities and service charges, including how they differ from voluntary tips and how they may be treated for tax and payroll purposes. The guidance is relevant for restaurants, bars, taverns, and hospitality businesses considering service charges or auto-gratuities as part of their compensation model.

E-Commerce & DTC

- [**Product Information Gaps Can Cost Online Beverage Alcohol Sales**](#) – *BevAlc360*

Forum materials note that many consumers abandon online purchases because of insufficient or inaccurate product information. For beverage alcohol, this can include missing bottle images, unclear sizes, incomplete tasting notes, poor category tagging, or inconsistent brand descriptions. While independent retailers may not control every digital shelf, the issue is a reminder that online product presentation increasingly affects consumer confidence, conversion, and repeat purchasing.

ABL Member Benefit



ServSafe Alcohol

ABL members have access to preferred pricing on ServSafe Alcohol training through the National Restaurant Association. ServSafe Alcohol provides responsible alcohol service training for bartenders, servers, managers, and other staff who sell or serve beverage alcohol. The program helps employees recognize signs of intoxication, check identification, manage difficult situations, and support safe, responsible service practices. [Learn more »](#)

States

- **MA: [Cambridge Considers One-Drink-Per-30-Minutes Rule](#)** – *NBC Boston*
Cambridge officials are reviewing draft alcohol rules that would require bars and restaurants to develop a system ensuring customers wait 30 minutes before ordering another alcoholic beverage. Local operators say the proposal would be difficult to enforce and could create a poor guest experience. City officials stress that the draft is preliminary and intended to gather input, with no final vote expected until later this year.
- **MO: [Kansas City Delays Enforcement Of Small-Bottle Alcohol Ban](#)** – *FOX 4*
Kansas City has agreed not to enforce a new ordinance restricting the sale of small bottles of spirits and certain single-serve malt beverages in selected neighborhoods until August 10, provided challengers do not seek a temporary restraining order. The ordinance targets products such as miniatures, nips, shooters, half-pints, and some individual containers. Retailers have warned that the restrictions could hurt sales and threaten affected businesses.
- **TN: [New Law Increases Penalties For Drink Spiking](#)** – *WBIR*
Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee signed legislation making drink spiking a Class D felony punishable by two to 12 years in prison and a fine of up to \$5,000. Earlier versions of the bill included requirements for alcohol-serving businesses to provide drink testing devices and post notices, but those provisions were not included in the final law. Supporters say additional legislation may be considered next session.

International

- **[Belgium Beer Consumption Declines Despite Growth In Alcohol-Free Beer](#)** – *The Brussels Times*
Belgium's beer consumption fell 3.2% in 2025, with declines in both hospitality and retail channels. Alcohol-free beer grew sharply, but not enough to offset broader category weakness. The data mirrors trends seen in other mature beer markets, where moderation, economic pressure, and shifting consumer habits are challenging traditional volume growth.
- **[United Kingdom Reviews Alcohol-Free Labeling Rules](#)** – *Vinetur*
The British government is reviewing whether drinks labeled "alcohol-free" should be allowed to contain up to 0.5% ABV and whether sales restrictions for minors should apply to certain no- and low-alcohol products. The review reflects growing

regulatory attention to a fast-expanding category that sits between soft drinks and traditional alcohol beverages.

- [**China Cracks Down On Counterfeit Premium Spirits**](#) – *Vinetur*

Chinese authorities detained 40 suspects and seized more than 75,000 cases of counterfeit “special-supply” liquor falsely marketed as connected to government or military channels. Regulators also targeted online stores, livestreaming channels, packaging suppliers, and licensed manufacturers allegedly involved in the counterfeit supply chain. The case highlights the ongoing risks counterfeit spirits pose to consumer safety, brand integrity, and trust in premium alcohol markets.

 Back Bar

- [**Alcohol-Free Beer Drinkers Still Consume Alcohol**](#) – *The Drinks Business*

New research from KAM Insight and Athletic Brewing found that 94% of alcohol-free beer drinkers also consume alcohol, suggesting that non-alcoholic beer is often being used as a moderation tool rather than a full replacement for traditional alcohol. The research also found that “zebra striping,” or alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, is becoming more common in pubs and bars.

- [**Wine Tries To Find New Consumers Through Sports Marketing**](#) – *VinePair*

Wine brands are increasingly turning to sports partnerships to broaden their consumer base and connect with younger and more diverse audiences. GALLO, Jackson Family Wines, and others are using partnerships with the NFL, MLB, NBA, WNBA, U.S. Open, and team-level activations to bring wine into higher-energy social occasions.

- [**Bag Wines, Low-Alcohol Wines, And No-Alcohol Wines Gain Attention**](#) –

Northwest Wine Report

Pacific Northwest wineries are experimenting with alternative packaging, lower-alcohol wines, and non-alcohol offerings as the wine industry looks for new ways to meet changing consumer preferences. Bagged formats can offer convenience, portability, and environmental benefits, while lower-alcohol and no-alcohol wines appeal to moderation-minded consumers.

 About ABL

American Beverage Licensees is the preeminent national trade association for independent beer, wine, and spirits retailers. ABL represents the interests of package stores, taverns, bars, restaurants, and other licensed beverage alcohol retailers before Congress, federal agencies, industry partners, and the public. ABL works to protect a responsible, competitive, and effective beverage alcohol marketplace rooted in the three-tier system, state-based regulation, and independent retail entrepreneurship. To learn more about ABL, visit www.ablusa.org.

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