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ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

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Let's Get Federal

- [CANADA Act Would Direct USTR Investigation Of Provincial Alcohol Bans](#) – *Global News*
Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) introduced legislation directing the U.S. Trade Representative to investigate Canadian provincial restrictions on American alcohol products under Section 301 of the Trade Act. The bill responds to the continued removal or restriction of U.S. wine, beer and spirits by most provincial liquor boards and could lead to enforcement action if USTR determines the policies unfairly burden U.S. commerce.
- [Canada: Doug Ford Refuses To Restore U.S. Alcohol Sales In Ontario Until Washington Lifts Tariffs](#) – *Global News*
Ontario Premier Doug Ford said the province will keep U.S. beverage alcohol off LCBO shelves until the United States removes tariffs on Canadian goods. His position underscores how provincial alcohol purchasing has become leverage in the broader trade dispute, prolonging lost market access for American producers and limiting product choice for Canadian consumers.
- [Toasts Not Tariffs Coalition Urges Exemption For Wine And Spirits](#) – *Toasts Not Tariffs Coalition*
A 58-member beverage alcohol coalition, including ABL, filed comments opposing proposed Section 301 tariffs tied to trading partners' forced-labor enforcement policies. The coalition urged USTR to preserve USMCA-compliant exemptions, implement tariff-free treatment for U.K. whiskies and exclude wine and distilled spirits from new tariffs, warning that added costs would further pressure retailers, restaurants and an already fragile hospitality sector.

- [**A 41 Percent Tax? Hold Our Beer**](#) – *The Washington Post* (\$)

A Washington Post analysis highlights research estimating that federal, state and local taxes account for roughly 41 percent of the retail price of beer. The piece illustrates how excise taxes and other levies are embedded throughout the supply chain, often making the full tax burden largely invisible to consumers while raising costs for brewers, distributors and retailers.

Legal & Regulatory

- [**New York Distillery Challenges Washington Liquor Sales Laws At Ninth Circuit**](#) – *Law360* (\$)

A New York distillery is asking the Ninth Circuit to review Washington State restrictions affecting out-of-state alcohol producers and sellers. The case adds to the continuing body of litigation testing how state alcohol laws interact with the dormant Commerce Clause and the authority preserved for states under the 21st Amendment.

- [**Ohio Pilot Pays Retailers To Reduce Alcohol And Tobacco Marketing**](#) – *Ohio State News*

An Ohio State University-led pilot in Montgomery County offers independent retailers financial incentives to reduce storefront advertising, restrict alcohol sales hours and make other public-health-oriented changes. Early participation was limited, but researchers said the program represents a different model that treats retailers as community partners rather than relying solely on enforcement and penalties.

Industry

- [**Spirits Overtook Beer In U.S. Alcohol Revenue In 2025**](#) – *Vinetur*

Spirits captured 42.4 percent of U.S. beverage alcohol revenue in 2025, narrowly surpassing beer at 41.8 percent, even as beer remained the larger category by physical volume. Ready-to-drink cocktails drove much of the shift, illustrating how convenience, occasion and price are reshaping category competition while overall consumption remains under pressure.

- [**Kroger Adds Wine Tasting Bars At 147 Stores**](#) – *Hoodline*

Kroger is rolling out dedicated wine shops and tasting bars in 147 stores, with trained wine stewards offering samples and pairing advice. The concept expands grocery competition with independent package stores by adding an experiential, on-premise-style component to the supermarket wine aisle.

- **Southern Glazer's Revises Service Model For Independent Customers** – *Business Wire*

Southern Glazer's announced a hybrid service model combining field sales, inside sales and digital commerce for an additional segment of its independent customer base. The company said the changes will expand its Customer Solutions Team and Proof platform while producing a net workforce reduction of about one percent, reflecting changing customer engagement patterns and continued investment in technology.
- **Whiskey Glut Puts Barrel Values And Distillery Loans Under Pressure** – *Bloomberg (\$)*

Court proceedings involving Uncle Nearest and other distressed distilleries are exposing how difficult it can be to value aging whiskey used as loan collateral. With U.S. whiskey inventories elevated and buyers scarce, lenders and receivers are finding that barrels valued highly during the bourbon boom may command steep discounts in forced-sale conditions.
- **Costco To Discontinue Co-Branded Kirkland Beers, Ending Partnership With Deschutes** – *VinePair*

Costco and Deschutes Brewery are ending their partnership on Kirkland Signature Helles Lager and Vintage Ale after a roughly two-year run. Production is winding down despite strong consumer response and industry awards, highlighting the short life cycles and shifting priorities that can shape private-label relationships between large retailers and craft producers.
- **Diageo To Close Aviation Gin Visitor Center** – *The Spirits Business*

Diageo will close the Aviation American Gin visitor center in Portland, Oregon, three years after it opened. The company said Aviation remains an important brand, but the closure reflects evolving business needs and follows the earlier transfer of bottling and blending away from the site.
- **Beer Institute Releases May 2026 Taxable Removals Estimate Report** – *Beer Institute*

The Beer Institute released its May taxable removals estimate, a closely watched measure of beer shipped into the U.S. market and subject to federal excise tax. The monthly report provides another indicator of category demand and inventory movement as brewers and retailers assess whether summer occasions can slow the industry's recent volume declines.

- [Wilson Daniels Aligns With Reyes Beverage Group In 7 States And Johnson Brothers In 5 States](#) – *Wilson Daniels*

Wilson Daniels announced new distribution alignments with Reyes Beverage Group in seven states and Johnson Brothers in five states. The changes expand the fine wine and spirits importer's access to major wholesaler networks and add to the broader reshuffling of supplier relationships as the middle tier consolidates and companies reassess routes to market.

Cannabis & THC

- [Survey: 77% Of THC Beverage Consumers Say They're Drinking Less Alcohol](#) – *The Marijuana Herald*

A survey commissioned by THC beverage company Crescent Canna found that 77 percent of respondents who consume THC drinks said they now drink less alcohol, while more than one in five reported stopping alcohol use entirely. The findings are self-reported and drawn from the company's customer base, but they reinforce the competitive pressure intoxicating hemp beverages may place on traditional alcohol occasions.

- [FL: Dangers Of Kratom Abuse Make Strong Argument For A Ban In Florida](#) – *Tallahassee Democrat*

A Tallahassee Democrat opinion piece argues that Florida should prohibit kratom because of addiction, contamination and overdose concerns associated with concentrated products. The debate is relevant to retailers as states increasingly scrutinize psychoactive products sold outside traditional alcohol, tobacco and cannabis regulatory systems.

- [TX: Senators Discuss Dangers Of THC Products](#) – *Texas Scorecard*

The Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee examined youth exposure, poisonings, mental-health emergencies and other concerns tied to intoxicating THC products. The hearing signals that lawmakers may again consider tighter restrictions or a broader ban after Gov. Greg Abbott vetoed a prohibition last year and instead called for stronger age, packaging and testing rules.

- [VA: Virginia Is Joining The DMV's Legal Cannabis Market. Here's What Changes](#) – *Axios*

Virginia approved a regulated adult-use cannabis market scheduled to open July 1, 2027, bringing the commonwealth into the legal retail landscape already established in Maryland and the District of Columbia. The change could redirect

regional consumer traffic while new Virginia restrictions on some hemp-derived THC products may create a transitional period before licensed cannabis sales begin.



Business & Market Watch

- **NIQ: Alcohol Sales Cool After Juneteenth Weekend** – *NIQ*
Total alcohol dollar sales reached \$8.8 billion during the four weeks ending June 27, down 3.1 percent from a year earlier, while case volume declined 4.9 percent. Prepared cocktails remained positive and beer and spirits showed relative resilience, but wine continued to post the steepest declines.
- **World Cup Has Not Reversed Accelerating Off-Premise Declines** – *Brewbound (\$)*
Bump Williams Consulting reported that second-quarter declines accelerated across beer, wine and spirits despite hopes for a World Cup lift. On-premise traffic has benefited in host markets, but off-premise gains have been limited, with prepared cocktails and select import brands among the clearest pockets of growth.
- **Liquor Stocks Are Priced For A Big Tobacco Moment** – *The Wall Street Journal (\$)*
Publicly traded distillers are trading at historically low valuations as U.S. spirits volumes decline, consumers moderate and GLP-1 drugs and THC products add competitive pressure. The analysis argues that the selloff may already reflect much of the bad news, particularly for companies with stronger exposure to growth markets outside the United States.
- **Oregon Wine Production And Sales Fell Sharply In 2025** – *Oregon Wine Board*
Oregon wine grape production fell 25 percent in 2025, while wine sales declined across all channels and exports dropped 29 percent. Many growers reported leaving fruit unharvested because they could not find buyers, highlighting the severity of the broader wine downturn and the loss of access to the Canadian market.
- **U.S. Alcohol Wholesalers Reported \$15.381 Billion In May Sales** – *U.S. Census Bureau*
U.S. alcohol merchant wholesalers reported an estimated \$15.381 billion in May sales, according to federal wholesale trade data. The figure offers a broad snapshot of middle-tier activity and helps track whether supplier-to-distributor

movement is stabilizing as beverage alcohol demand remains uneven across categories and channels.

Associate Member Spotlight

DIAGEO

Diageo

Diageo is a global beverage alcohol company whose portfolio includes leading spirits and beer brands such as Johnnie Walker, Crown Royal, Smirnoff, Don Julio, Casamigos, Baileys, Captain Morgan and Guinness. The company works across more than 180 countries and supports responsible drinking, hospitality and the broader beverage alcohol marketplace through brand investment, consumer education and industry engagement. [Visit Diageo »](#)

States

- [**AK: RNDC Files Notice Of 160 Layoffs In Alaska**](#) – *Brewbound (\$)*
Republic National Distributing Company filed notice of 160 layoffs in Alaska as the wholesaler continues to retrench and reorganize operations across several markets. The development adds to ongoing uncertainty for suppliers and retailers as distribution relationships shift and the middle tier consolidates.
- [**KY: 25 Highlands Business Owners Say They Would Have To Close If “Moist” Election Goes Through**](#) – *WDRB*
Business owners in Louisville’s Highlands neighborhood warned that a proposed “moist” election could force bars to generate at least 70 percent of revenue from food in order to continue serving alcohol. The Louisville Hospitality Association said as many as 25 establishments and roughly 500 jobs could be at risk if voters approve the change.
- [**MI: Survey: Michiganders Support Lowering Blood Alcohol Content Limit For Drivers**](#) – *MLive*
A statewide survey found support among Michigan residents for reducing the per se impaired-driving threshold from 0.08 to 0.05 percent blood alcohol concentration. The results add momentum to a policy debate already active in several states, though hospitality groups continue to emphasize the importance of targeting dangerous driving without discouraging responsible consumption.

- **OR: Vineyard And Winery Census Documents Industry Contraction** – *Oregon Wine Board*
Oregon's annual census found fewer harvested acres, lower yields, reduced production and weaker sales in 2025. Direct-to-consumer sales proved the most resilient channel, while export revenue fell sharply as Canadian market access largely disappeared.
- **TN: New Liquor Laws Expand Retail And On-Premise Flexibility** – *JD Supra*
A package of Tennessee laws effective July 1 addresses alcohol service on golf courses, sales at salons and barbershops, distillery retail privileges, tequila sampling, drink-spiking penalties, Nashville event cups and other licensing issues. The changes create new operating opportunities while leaving several enforcement and implementation questions for the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission.
- **UT: New Study Says Utah's .05 DUI Level Led To Fewer Alcohol-Related Crash Fatalities** – *The Salt Lake Tribune*
A new study found that Utah's 2018 adoption of a 0.05 blood alcohol concentration limit was associated with a decline in alcohol-related crash fatalities without measurable harm to tourism or alcohol sales. Supporters are citing the findings as evidence for similar laws elsewhere, while retailer and hospitality stakeholders continue to monitor how lower limits affect consumer behavior and enforcement.
- **WA: Washington Liquor Taxes Tower Over Other States** – *Axios*
Washington continues to impose one of the nation's highest effective tax burdens on distilled spirits through a combination of liter taxes and retail sales taxes. The structure raises shelf prices and widens category disparities, making tax policy a significant competitive and affordability issue for the state's package stores, bars and restaurants.

 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, helping employees recognize signs of intoxication, check identification, manage

difficult situations and support safe, responsible service practices. [Learn more »](#)

International

- [UK: Competition Authorities Urged To Investigate Beer Market](#) – *Beer Today*
CAMRA and independent brewers are calling for a Competition and Markets Authority investigation into the U.K. beer market, arguing that global brewing groups and tied supply arrangements restrict independent beer access to pubs. The campaign emphasizes retailer and publican choice, ownership transparency and the competitive effects of concentrated routes to market.
 - [EU: Cider Labeling Fight Pits Traditional Producers Against Major Brewers](#) – *Financial Times* (\$)
European policymakers are considering new labeling categories that would distinguish traditional cider made largely from apple or pear juice from lower-juice cider beverages. Scandinavian producers and Carlsberg argue the proposal could confuse consumers and fragment the single market, while French and Spanish producers favor stronger protection for traditional products.
 - [Europe: Extreme Heat Could Change The Drinks Mix](#) – *Reuters*
Research suggests alcohol sales rise with temperature only to a point, then weaken when conditions become dangerously hot. Brewers and hospitality businesses are adapting with more low- and no-alcohol options, air-conditioned spaces and revised operating strategies as extreme heat affects consumer behavior, agriculture and production costs.
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Back Bar

- [Washington And His Men Knew How To Party](#) – *Reason*
A look at the drinking culture of America's founders revisits George Washington's City Tavern celebration, his Mount Vernon distillery and the prominent place of beer, wine, cider and spirits in early American political and social life.
- [Beer Used To Own Independence Day. Now It Has Lost The Cooler](#) – *VinePair*
VinePair examines how flavored malt beverages, hard teas and spirits-based canned cocktails have eroded beer's once-dominant position at July Fourth gatherings. The piece argues that changing consumer tastes and total-beverage strategies are reshaping the holiday cooler.

- [The Fun Shortage Is Real, And It Is Making America Miserable](#) – Bloomberg (\$) A broader cultural essay considers the decline of social leisure and spontaneous gathering in American life. For bars and taverns, the trend reinforces the importance of welcoming third places where people can connect in person, build community and enjoy shared experiences.
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Calendar

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
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
November 9-11	NBWA 13th Annual Next Generation Leadership Conference – San Diego, CA

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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