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ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

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Let's Get Federal

- [Rep. Van Duyne Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Bring Regulatory Clarity to Hemp-derived Beverages](#) – *Press Release*

Reps. Beth Van Duyne (R-TX) and Greg Landsman (D-OH) introduced the bipartisan Beverage Regulatory Parity Act, legislation establishing a federal framework for hemp-derived beverages using many of the regulatory principles long applied to beverage alcohol. The bill would create standards for labeling, advertising, trade practices and distribution while limiting covered products to naturally occurring cannabinoids and preserving state authority over whether and how the beverages may be sold.

ABL Statement:

- [ABL Supports Bipartisan Beverage Regulatory Parity Act](#) – ABL called the bill a thoughtful approach that draws on the proven principles of beverage alcohol regulation, establishes enforceable product and marketplace standards, protects state authority and recognizes the role licensed, age-restricted beverage retailers can play in a responsible hemp beverage market.

- [ABL Statement on Senate Passage of the Common Cents Act](#) – *American Beverage Licensees*

ABL welcomed the Senate's August 7 passage of the bipartisan Common Cents Act, saying the measure would give Main Street retailers clarity for handling cash transactions after penny production ends. The legislation would establish a uniform federal framework for rounding cash purchases, helping bars, taverns and package liquor stores avoid a patchwork of different requirements. Because the Senate approved an amended version, the House must act again before the bill can advance to the President.

- [Hemp Beverage Alliance applauds Senate vote on continuing resolution \(CR\)](#) – *Hemp Beverage Alliance*

The Hemp Beverage Alliance applauded the Senate's vote to include a temporary delay of the pending federal hemp prohibition, calling the extension a turning point in the push for a regulated hemp beverage marketplace. The group said the additional time should be used to develop a federal framework that prioritizes public safety while allowing responsible hemp beverage businesses to remain in the market.

- [Canada's lead trade negotiator warned U.S. counterparts more tariffs could halt trade talks, sources say](#) – *BNN Bloomberg*

Canada's lead trade negotiator reportedly warned U.S. officials that additional 50 percent tariffs scheduled for August 19 could put further negotiations at risk. Alcohol remains a key point of friction, with most Canadian provinces continuing to keep U.S. beverage alcohol products off store shelves and Canadian officials saying those restrictions are unlikely to change without broader tariff relief.

Legal & Regulatory

- [Safeway's Tempest Over Wine Discounts Survives Motion to Dismiss](#) – *Kelley Drye*

A California federal court allowed consumer-protection claims to continue against Safeway over wine promotions that plaintiffs say created the impression of temporary discounts even though similar member pricing allegedly continued after the advertised expiration dates. The case highlights legal risks around promotional pricing language and the way consumers may interpret time-limited alcohol discounts.

Industry

- [Diageo CEO coy about headcount reduction figure under 'significant' restructure](#) – *Global Drinks Intel*

Diageo CEO Dave Lewis declined to specify how many jobs are being eliminated as part of the company's restructuring program, which is targeting \$1 billion in savings over three years. The company reported sharply higher severance costs in fiscal 2026 as it works to simplify operations, reduce duplication and improve accountability.

- [US distributor RNDC closes in on new deal for Kentucky assets](#) – *Yahoo Finance / Just Drinks*

Republic National Distributing Company has identified a new potential buyer for its Kentucky assets after Breakthru Beverage Group withdrew from an earlier transaction. The development is the latest step in RNDC's bankruptcy-driven restructuring and ongoing effort to sell remaining market operations.

- [Wholesalers to Trim Regional and Local Craft, per Annual Tamarron Survey – Brewbound \(\\$\)](#)
More than half of beer distributors surveyed by Tamarron Consulting said they plan to de-emphasize or reduce regional and local craft SKUs over the next year, while spirits-based RTDs and low- and no-alcohol products remain among the categories most likely to be added. The survey also found increasing wholesaler use of B2B e-commerce and AI, with distributors looking to suppliers for better digital assets, product data and platform integration.
- [Treasury Wine Estates profits plunge as US problems persist – The Drinks Business](#)
Treasury Wine Estates reported sharply lower profits as problems in the U.S. market continued to weigh on the company. The group is reducing inventory, grape intake and vineyard exposure while reviewing its Americas portfolio and operating model.
- [Monster’s energy drinks surge as alcohol sales fall 15% – The Drinks Business](#)
Monster Beverage reported strong growth in its core energy-drink business while net sales from its beverage-alcohol portfolio fell 15.2 percent to \$32.2 million in the quarter. The alcohol business includes the former CANarchy craft brands along with The Beast and Nasty Beast.
- [Problem Drinking in the U.S. Is on the Decline – The New York Times \(\\$\)](#)
New federal survey data show the share of Americans age 12 and older meeting criteria for alcohol use disorder fell to 8.9 percent in 2025 from 10.6 percent in 2021, a decline of roughly four million people. The findings add another data point to the broader moderation trend in U.S. alcohol consumption.

Business & Market Watch

- [Wine and Spirits Declines Narrowed for Third Straight Month in Q2 2026, WSWA SipSource® Data Shows – WSWA](#)
WSWA’s latest SipSource data show that combined wine and spirits volume and revenue declines moderated for a third straight month during the second quarter. Rolling 12-month volume was down 6.5 percent through June and revenue declined 5.5 percent, while the on-premise continued to outperform retail. WSWA cautioned that the market has not turned a corner, but said recent trends point toward greater stability.
- [2026: The Year of the Occasion – Brewbound \(\\$\)](#)
NBWA chief economist Lester Jones argues that beverage alcohol growth in 2026 is increasingly being driven by occasions rather than case volume. World Cup watch parties and other large events produced meaningful on-premise gains, while 80 percent of new beer-selling accounts are in the on-premise channel. The

trend reinforces the importance of bars, taverns, restaurants and other gathering places in creating demand and social drinking occasions.

- **How consumers are buying alcohol: NielsenIQ – The Shout**

NielsenIQ research finds that beverage alcohol purchasing is increasingly omnichannel, with consumers moving among physical retail, online platforms and the on-premise. In the U.S., online alcohol shoppers skew more premium than in-store shoppers, while bartenders remain powerful brand influencers: globally, 52 percent of consumers say they are likely to buy a drink based on a bartender recommendation and 71 percent say they would buy a drink for home after trying it in a bar or restaurant.

 Associate Member Spotlight



Sazerac

Sazerac is an independent, family-owned global spirits company with roots stretching back nearly 400 years. Its portfolio includes more than 450 brands from distilleries around the world, including Buffalo Trace, Sazerac Rye, Fireball, Southern Comfort, Blanton's, Eagle Rare, W.L. Weller, Pappy Van Winkle and BuzzBallz. The company traces its modern identity to New Orleans and the Sazerac Cocktail, one of the city's most enduring contributions to American cocktail culture. [Visit Sazerac »](#)

 States

- **[CA: California Craft Liquor Delivery Is About to Go Away, Thanks to Big Money Lobbying](#) – KQED / CalMatters**

California's temporary authorization allowing craft distillers to ship spirits directly to consumers is set to expire at the end of the year unless lawmakers intervene. A proposal to extend the authority has faced opposition from wholesalers, the wine industry and labor groups, while craft distillers argue that direct shipping has become an important sales channel. The debate again puts direct-to-consumer privileges, delivery safeguards and three-tier market access at the center of state alcohol policy.

- **[IL: Wheaton To Consider Amending Liquor Code To Include Alcohol-Infused Products](#) – Patch**

Wheaton is considering changes to its local liquor code to account for alcohol-infused products such as whipped cream, gelatin and popsicles following a new Illinois law. The proposal would require alcohol-infused products above 0.5 percent ABV to be regulated under the liquor code and includes display

restrictions intended to separate them from similar non-alcohol products that may appeal to children.

- **[MD: Dozens of liquor, other stores sue Prince George's Co. over new fee](#)** – *WTOP*
A group of Prince George's County business owners, including liquor-store operators, is challenging a new \$5,000 annual fee imposed on certain businesses. The plaintiffs argue the charge is effectively an unauthorized tax rather than a lawful use-and-occupancy fee. The case is particularly significant for independent retailers because the new charge applies selectively to liquor stores and a small number of other business categories.
- **[MN: Municipal liquor sales down in 2025](#)** – *Marshall Independent*
Marshall's municipal liquor store reported 2025 sales of about \$7.19 million, down roughly \$228,000 from the prior year, although income before transfers increased slightly. Beer remained the largest sales category, while spirits, THC products and ready-to-drink cocktails contributed strongly to gross profit.
- **[NC: ABC Commission delays vote to hike liquor prices, after restaurants push back](#)** – *WRAL*
The North Carolina ABC Commission postponed a vote on a proposed minimum pricing policy for distilled spirits after restaurant and bar operators raised concerns about higher costs. The Commission said it will conduct additional research and gather public feedback before considering further action. Hospitality businesses have argued that the proposal would either force additional menu-price increases or require operators to absorb costs in an already difficult operating environment.
- **[OK: New Oklahoma DUI Felony Law Sparks Fight Over Jury Fairness, Vague Rules](#)** – *Hoodline*
A new Oklahoma law taking effect November 1 will allow prosecutors in some circumstances to combine multiple pending DUI cases into a single felony charge. The measure has drawn criticism from defense attorneys who argue that the statute is vague and could prejudice juries by allowing them to hear about multiple alleged offenses together.
- **[PA: Pennsylvania to auction off 20 restaurant liquor licenses](#)** – *ABC27*
The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board is auctioning 20 expired restaurant liquor licenses across 20 counties. Minimum bids are \$25,000, and winning bidders will have up to six months to submit license applications. The auction is part of Pennsylvania's process for returning expired licenses to the marketplace.
- **[SC: Can you buy alcohol in SC with an expired driver's license, even if shows you're over 21?](#)** – *The State via AOL*
South Carolina retailers and bars generally cannot rely on an expired driver's license as valid identification for an alcohol purchase, even when the document

shows the customer is older than 21. The issue highlights the practical challenges retailers face when applying age-verification rules consistently at the point of sale.

- [TN: A Memphis restaurant banned all customers under 30 and locals are cheering the decision](#) – *Upworthy*
A Memphis bar and lounge has raised its minimum entry age from 21 to 30, saying the change is intended to enhance the dining experience. The policy has generated local attention amid concerns about safety and nightlife incidents, while also illustrating the discretion private hospitality businesses can exercise when setting age-based entry rules so long as they are applied consistently.
- [TX: Texas hemp-derived THC ban hits businesses as Senate candidates clash over policy](#) – *KTSM 9 News*
Texas businesses are reporting financial impacts following implementation of the state's ban on most hemp-derived THC products. The issue is also becoming part of the state's U.S. Senate debate, underscoring the increasingly political divide over whether intoxicating hemp products should be prohibited or regulated.

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

- [Canada: U.S. alcohol is a bargaining chip in trade talks, but how much is it worth?](#) – *Global News*
U.S. beverage alcohol remains a significant point of leverage in Canada-U.S. trade talks, with most Canadian provinces still keeping American products off store shelves. Global News estimates the boycotts have reduced U.S. alcohol exports to Canada sharply, while Canadian retailers have often replaced removed

products with domestic or other imported brands. The dispute has become a visible political pressure point ahead of the August 19 tariff deadline.

- [**Germany plans to ban alcohol for 14 and 15-year-olds**](#) – NABCA / DPA
Germany's federal government has backed legislation to end the country's longstanding 'supervised drinking' exception, which currently allows 14- and 15-year-olds to consume beer and wine in public when accompanied by a parent or guardian. The proposal will now go to the Bundestag. Germany otherwise generally permits the purchase and public consumption of beer and wine beginning at age 16.
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Back Bar

- [**Reservation Apps Have Made Getting Into a Restaurant a Nightmare**](#) – *The Wall Street Journal* (\$)
Competition among reservation platforms, credit-card companies and new membership services is reshaping how sought-after restaurant tables are allocated. Restaurants are being offered incentives for exclusivity or access to prime reservations, while diners increasingly face fragmented booking systems, paid memberships and secondary-market services. For operators, the technology can help fill tables and identify valuable customers, but it also adds complexity and can weaken direct relationships with regular guests.
- [**How RTDs are winning over bars**](#) – *The Spirits Business*
Ready-to-drink products are gaining traction in bars and restaurants as operators look for speed, consistency and lower-waste serving options. Suppliers say the strongest opportunities are in high-volume settings, patios, music venues, hotels and other occasions where premium convenience matters. The trend suggests RTDs are increasingly functioning as an on-premise complement to traditional cocktails rather than solely an off-premise category.
- [**How weight-loss medication is changing relationships with alcohol**](#) – *BBC via AOL*
People taking GLP-1 weight-loss medications including Wegovy and Mounjaro are reporting reduced interest in alcohol, lower tolerance and, in some cases, nausea after drinking. Researchers are studying whether the drugs' effects on reward pathways could eventually make them useful in treating alcohol use disorder, although larger clinical trials are still needed.
- [**The rise of mood drinks**](#) – *Axios*
Functional 'mood drinks' are expanding as consumers look for beverages promising relaxation, energy or social connection without alcohol. NielsenIQ data cited by Axios put U.S. functional-beverage sales at \$31.3 billion over the past year, up nearly 11 percent. The products add another competitor for the adult

beverage occasion as consumers increasingly choose drinks based on the effect or experience they want.

- **Smoking is back in fashion. Why?** – *Financial Times* (\$)
The Financial Times examines the renewed visibility of cigarettes in fashion, celebrity culture and social media after years of declining cultural acceptance. The trend is being amplified by younger influencers and nostalgia-driven imagery, raising questions about how quickly public-health norms and consumer habits can shift when an old product is recast as fashionable.
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Calendar

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 11-13	ABL Fall Board of Directors Meeting – Orlando, FL
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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