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ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

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Let's Get Federal

- [Americans' Drinking Remains at Record Low](#) – *Gallup*
Gallup reports that 54 percent of U.S. adults say they drink alcohol, matching last year's record low, while just 13 percent say they sometimes drink too much. Seventeen percent say they have substituted nonalcoholic beverages for alcohol.
- [The Great Modern Train Robbery: Thieves Steal \\$200 Million a Year](#) – *Claims Journal*
Cargo theft from U.S. railroads is estimated to cost roughly \$200 million annually, prompting rail carriers to deploy new tracking technology, increase coordination with law enforcement and support federal legislation aimed at organized cargo theft. Beverage alcohol is among the high-value consumer products vulnerable to diversion and resale through illicit channels.
- [Stolen Alcohol as a Threat to Alcohol Industry and Public Safety](#) – *Alcohol Law Review*
The article examines stolen beverage alcohol as both an industry loss and a public-safety concern, including the risks created when diverted products re-enter commerce outside licensed distribution and retail channels.
- [Americans want to make domestic beer great again: Poll](#) – *Washington Examiner*
A national poll found broad support for tariffs on Mexican beer and for policies intended to protect U.S. brewing jobs, even when respondents were told tariffs could raise beer prices. The findings arrive as policymakers and labor groups continue debating trade measures affecting imported beer.
- [Constellation Brands Announces \\$100 Million Investment to Support U.S. Farmers](#) – *Constellation Brands*
Constellation Brands announced an incremental \$100 million, five-year investment supporting barley, corn and hops growers in Idaho, Montana and North Dakota. The company says the effort will expand purchases from U.S.

farmers and create a grower-led advisory committee focused on agricultural resilience and market access.

- [Canada: PM asks provinces to stock U.S. alcohol](#) – *Global News*
Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has asked provinces to restock American alcohol as Canada and the United States finalize a trade agreement. Provincial removal of U.S. beverage alcohol has been a significant pressure point in the broader tariff dispute.
- [Discus invites members to Capitol Hill](#) – *The Spirits Business*
DISCUS is inviting members to Washington for a September 24 Congressional Fly-In, where distillers will meet with lawmakers and staff to discuss federal policies affecting the spirits sector and share the economic impact of their businesses.

Legal & Regulatory

- [Home Distilling in the United States: Legal Background and the Current Court Fight Over the Federal Ban](#) – *Husch Blackwell*
A legal analysis reviews the federal prohibition on home distilling and the developing constitutional challenge to that ban. Conflicting appellate rulings have increased the possibility of Supreme Court review and could have broader implications for federal alcohol regulation and Commerce Clause authority.
- [July 2026 alcohol industry update: Federal antitrust developments, tariff changes, and hemp beverage legislation](#) – *McDermott Will & Schulte*
A July legal and policy roundup reviews federal antitrust activity, beverage alcohol tariff changes and the emerging congressional framework for hemp-derived THC beverages, highlighting several developments with implications for competition, pricing, distribution and state authority.

Cannabis & Hemp

- [The Cannabis Industry Should Join Us In Supporting Hemp Drink Regulation Over Prohibition, Alcohol Industry Lobbyist Says \(Op-Ed\)](#) – *Marijuana Moment*
WSWA's Dawson Hobbs argues that cannabis advocates should support a workable federal regulatory framework for hemp-derived THC beverages rather than allowing prohibition to take effect. The commentary calls for age restrictions, testing, labeling, trade-practice rules and state authority modeled in part on beverage alcohol regulation.
- [The Regulatory Chaos of Cannabis Drinks Retail](#) – *SevenFifty Daily*
The article examines the patchwork of state rules governing hemp-derived THC beverages, including wide differences in where products may be sold, age

restrictions, potency limits and licensing. The result is a rapidly expanding category operating under very different retail rules from state to state.

- [TN: Alcohol industry spending spiked as lawmakers considered new hemp law](#) – *Johnson City Press*
Tennessee lobbying and campaign-finance activity increased as lawmakers considered new restrictions on hemp-derived cannabinoid products. The report highlights the growing political stakes surrounding how states regulate hemp beverages and other intoxicating cannabinoid products.
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Industry

- [World Cup Is Gone. Beer's Summer Blues Remain. Now What?](#) – *VinePair*
The World Cup generated meaningful on-premise beer occasions, but available scan and shipment data suggest it was not enough to reverse the broader weakness in U.S. beer. The article finds stronger performance for spirits-based RTDs and argues the beer category still faces difficult demand trends heading out of summer.
- [Au Vodka founders to toast £500m windfall from Sazerac sale](#) – *Sky News via Yahoo Finance*
Sazerac is in advanced talks to acquire U.K.-based Au Vodka in a transaction reportedly valued near £500 million. The deal would add a fast-growing vodka and RTD brand to Sazerac's expanding global portfolio.
- [Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits Teamsters Win Strike in New York](#) – *International Brotherhood of Teamsters*
About 200 Southern Glazer's employees across New York ratified a five-year agreement after a 24-hour strike. The contract includes wage increases exceeding 30 percent, higher pension contributions, additional paid time off and protections related to AI and automation.
- [Diageo sheds 2,000 staff as CEO Dave Lewis kicks off restructuring](#) – *Financial Times (\$)*
Diageo reduced its workforce by nearly 2,000 employees in its latest financial year as CEO Dave Lewis begins a major restructuring program. The company is targeting substantial savings as it responds to weaker spirits demand, inflation and pressure on profitability.
- [World Spirits Alliance announces new CEO](#) – *The Spirits Business*
David Williamson of William Grant & Sons will become CEO of the World Spirits Alliance in November, succeeding founding CEO Helen Medina. The leadership change comes as the group continues to build its role as a global advocacy voice for distilled spirits.

- [Wine: Consolidation continues as consumption wanes](#) – *Wine Business*
U.S. wine market value continues to show modest growth even as volume contracts, encouraging further consolidation among wineries, brands and service providers. On-premise sales remain a relative bright spot while producers continue to work through weaker consumption and excess supply.
- [BuzzBallz Rolls Out 2 Pop-Tarts-Inspired Flavors](#) – *Yahoo*
BuzzBallz is expanding its flavored RTD lineup with two Pop-Tarts-inspired limited releases, illustrating the category's continued use of recognizable consumer brands, novelty flavors and cross-category partnerships to attract attention at retail.



Business & Market Watch

- [Gen Z's \\$3 hack to beat the soaring cost of going out in NYC — tiny canned cocktails that pack a fierce punch](#) – *New York Post*
High-ABV, single-serve canned cocktails are gaining traction among younger consumers looking for lower-cost ways to drink before going out. The trend underscores both the price sensitivity of Gen Z and the strength of convenient RTD formats.
- [Why category boundaries are disappearing in alcohol](#) – *The Drinks Association*
NIQ argues that consumers increasingly choose beverages by occasion, flavor, convenience and format rather than staying loyal to beer, wine, spirits or RTDs. The shift is making traditional category boundaries less useful for understanding how people shop and drink.
- [Pandemic lockdowns never ended for some people](#) – *Financial Times* (\$)
New time-use data show a sharp increase in social isolation among a segment of young adults, including one in ten Americans ages 23 to 29 who spent no face-to-face time with another person on an average day in 2023. The trend has implications for hospitality businesses built around in-person social occasions.
- [Jefferies warns social isolation among young Americans threatens future alcohol demand](#) – *Yahoo Finance*
Jefferies analysts argue that declining face-to-face interaction among the most isolated young adults could become a structural headwind for alcohol because fewer social interactions mean fewer drinking occasions. The analysis suggests Gen Z's alcohol trends may be tied as much to social behavior as to health or moderation.
- [Finances and 'Productivity' are Impacting On-Premise Consumption Trends, per NIQ](#) – *Brewbound* (\$)
NIQ data suggest financial pressure is one of the leading reasons consumers are drinking less, particularly in bars and restaurants. Among consumers becoming

more mindful about alcohol, 29 percent cited saving money, while many also pointed to productivity and lifestyle considerations.

- **[Premiumisation redefined: from pricing to meaningful moments](#)** – *IWSR*
IWSR argues that inflation has distorted traditional measures of premiumization and that value-conscious consumers increasingly define premium products through quality, experience and occasion rather than price alone.
- **[Walmart Shares Slump on Weakest Sales Growth in Over Six Years](#)** – *The Wall Street Journal* (\$)
Walmart reported its weakest U.S. comparable-sales growth in more than six years, even as e-commerce remained strong and the retailer raised its full-year outlook. The results reinforce the cautious spending environment facing discretionary categories.

Associate Member Spotlight



Anheuser-Busch

Anheuser-Busch makes iconic beers, ready-to-drink spirits and beyond beer brands, including Michelob ULTRA – America’s #1 top-selling and fastest-growing beer – Busch Light, Budweiser, Bud Light, Stella Artois, Cutwater Spirits, NÜTRL Vodka Seltzer, BeatBox, industry-leading craft beers and non-alcohol beers like Michelob ULTRA Zero. They are guided by their commitment to the communities they call home and to the 65,000 hardworking Americans who bring their products to life. [Visit Anheuser-Busch »](#)

States

- **[CA: Lawmakers Strip Key Provisions From DUI Reform Bill With Last-Minute Amendments](#)** – *HSJ Chronicle*
A California Senate committee removed a provision that would have required ignition-interlock devices for all DUI convictions. The revised legislation represents a setback for advocates seeking broader use of in-vehicle alcohol detection after impaired-driving convictions.
- **[CA: California craft distillers push lawmakers to make direct-to-consumer shipping permanent](#)** – *CBS News*
California craft distillers are urging lawmakers to preserve pandemic-era authority allowing them to ship spirits directly to consumers. The current temporary authorization expires at the end of the year unless lawmakers act.

- [CA: LA street takeover acts as cover while thieves ransack liquor store](#) – *The Hill / KTLA via Yahoo*
Authorities say dozens of people looted a liquor store in Bellflower while a large street takeover blocked a nearby intersection. The incident highlights the vulnerability of alcohol retailers to organized theft and public-safety disruptions.
- [NC: ABC chairman doubles down on opposition to public-private liquor warehouse plan](#) – *The News & Observer (\$)*
North Carolina ABC Commission Chairman Hank Bauer continues to argue for a new state-owned liquor warehouse after lawmakers declined to authorize a proposed \$310 million financing plan. House leaders have favored alternatives that would bring greater private-sector involvement into warehouse operations.
- [OH: Anheuser-Busch Delivered More Than 25,000 Cans of Emergency Drinking Water to Ohio Amid Severe Flooding](#) – *Anheuser-Busch*
Anheuser-Busch and wholesaler partner Matesich Distributing delivered more than 25,000 cans of emergency drinking water to support residents and first responders following severe flooding in central Ohio.
- [RI: Liquor license ruling raises questions about General Assembly's role in special exemptions](#) – *Rhode Island Current*
A Rhode Island Supreme Court ruling voided a special legislative exemption used to obtain a Providence restaurant liquor license. The decision could have broader implications for dozens of other license exemptions enacted by the General Assembly.

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

- [Australia: Alcohol delivery restrictions revealed as SA government commits to DV royal commission five-year plan](#) – *ABC News Australia*
South Australia plans new restrictions on online alcohol delivery, including a two-

hour delay between ordering and delivery, as part of a broader response to recommendations from a domestic-violence royal commission.

- [Wetherspoons bans playing music or calls on phone loudspeaker](#) – *The Times* (\$)
Wetherspoons has banned customers from playing music, videos or calls over phone loudspeakers in its 792 pubs and is asking patrons to use silent mode or earphones after complaints about disruptive noise.
 - [UK is going the wrong way about protecting pubs](#) – *Financial Times* (\$)
A Financial Times commentary argues that policies restricting redevelopment of pubs may protect buildings without addressing the underlying economics of the pub trade. The piece argues that tax and operating-cost relief would do more to preserve viable pubs and community gathering places.
 - [India: Seven dead after suspected fake liquor poisoning in Gujarat](#) – *The Drinks Business*
Seven people died and at least 30 were hospitalized after allegedly consuming counterfeit alcohol containing toxic methanol in Gujarat, where alcohol is prohibited. The incident underscores the public-safety risks associated with illicit alcohol markets.
 - [Death stalks the Irish pub](#) – *Financial Times* (\$)
Ireland has lost roughly a quarter of its pubs since 2005 as rural depopulation, changing drinking habits and rising labor and energy costs squeeze operators. Publicans are pressing for tax relief and other support to preserve pubs as community and tourism assets.
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Calendar

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| 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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