

A PUBLICATION OF AMERICAN BEVERAGE LICENSEES

# ABL WEEKLY

POLICY, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS NEWS  
FOR BEVERAGE RETAILERS

Issue 564 | September 7, 2026



## Let's Get Federal

- **[House plans quick September exit](#) – *Roll Call***  
House Republicans have scrapped the final two weeks the chamber had been scheduled to meet before the midterm elections, leaving lawmakers with a single week of voting beginning September 14. With a continuing resolution now funding the government through December 11, the shortened calendar increases the likelihood that unresolved policy issues will be pushed into a busy lame-duck session.
- **[Main Street Businesses Urge U.S. House to Enact Bipartisan Penny Legislation](#) – *FMI***  
FMI and 210 national and state associations urged House leaders to pass the Senate-approved Common Cents Act, S. 1525. As noted in the Main Street letter, House passage is crucial for businesses and consumers to have certainty and consistency in cash transactions now that penny production has ended.
- **[Retail, Supply Chain Groups Urge Inclusion of Federal Organized Retail Crime Bill in Defense Spending Package](#) – *WWD / Sourcing Journal* (\$)**  
Retail and supply-chain groups are pressing Congress to include the Combating Organized Retail Crime Act in the 2027 National Defense Authorization Act. Supporters argue the measure would improve federal coordination and information-sharing against increasingly sophisticated organized theft networks that operate across jurisdictions and throughout the supply chain.
- **[Senate Banking To Vote Thursday On Landmark Digital Assets Bill](#) – *CU Today***  
The Senate Banking Committee is scheduled to vote on the CLARITY Act, which would establish a federal regulatory framework for digital assets. Credit-union groups are also urging lawmakers to keep unrelated interchange provisions, including the Credit Card Competition Act, out of the legislation.

## Association & Regulatory

- [July 2026 Control States Results](#) – NABCA  
Control states posted mixed spirits results in July. Nine-liter case volume increased 0.3 percent while dollar volume declined 2.2 percent, and rolling 12-month results remained negative as fewer selling days in Michigan and a business-model change in Utah weighed on performance.
  - [NABCA and NLLEA Launch Inaugural Alcohol Compliance Training Program in Vermont](#) – NABCA & NLLEA  
NABCA and the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association launched their first Alcohol Compliance Training program in Vermont, bringing regulators, law-enforcement officials and industry professionals together for specialized training on alcohol compliance and enforcement.
  - [August BPI Reflects End-of-Summer Inventory Adjustment](#) – NBWA  
The August Beer Purchasers' Index came in at 40, up 13 points from August 2025 but still below the 50 threshold that indicates expansion. A low at-risk inventory reading of 45 put the beer market in what NBWA described as a cautionary position at the end of summer.
  - [Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Educational Foundation Awards 51 Scholarships to Students of Member Company Employees](#) – WSWA  
The WSWA Educational Foundation awarded 51 scholarships to children of employees at member wholesaler companies. Each recipient will receive \$2,000 for two consecutive school years.
- 

## Cannabis & Hemp

- [Trump Signs Bill To Delay Hemp THC Product Ban, Giving Lawmakers More Time To Craft Regulations Instead Of Prohibition](#) – *Marijuana Moment*  
President Trump signed the government funding bill that moves implementation of the federal hemp restrictions from November 12 to December 11. The delay gives Congress additional time to consider a regulatory framework for hemp-derived THC products rather than allowing the pending prohibition to take effect.
- [Hemp Beverage Alliance applauds bipartisan House action to delay hemp ban to December](#) – *Hemp Beverage Alliance*  
The Hemp Beverage Alliance applauded the House vote to delay the pending federal hemp prohibition until December and called on Congress to use the additional time to develop a permanent regulatory framework focused on public safety, age restrictions and removing bad actors from the marketplace.
- [Medical Marijuana Industry Grapples With DEA's New Role](#) – *Law360* (\$)   
The medical marijuana industry is adjusting to a new federal regulatory relationship with the Drug Enforcement Administration following the redesignation

of marijuana as a Schedule III controlled substance. Attorneys and regulators say early interactions are already exposing difficult questions over federal oversight of state-sanctioned businesses.

---

## Industry

- [Diageo to cut 300 jobs at North America HQ – Just Drinks via Yahoo Finance](#)  
Diageo will eliminate 305 jobs at its North American headquarters in New York as part of its broader restructuring effort. The layoffs are scheduled to take effect September 30 and come as the company works to reduce costs and respond to weaker North American sales.
- [RNDC Bankruptcy Moves into Asset Wind-Down as Distributor Sheds Leases – Distribution Strategy Group](#)  
RNDC is moving deeper into its Chapter 11 wind-down, rejecting leases and shedding property associated with operations that are being sold or closed. The bankruptcy is increasingly focused on how remaining assets, contracts and creditor claims will be handled.
- [Alcohol distributor RNDC shutting down Georgia operations, laying off 558 workers after bankruptcy filing – CBS Atlanta](#)  
RNDC is closing its Georgia operations and eliminating 558 jobs at facilities in Atlanta and Marietta as part of its bankruptcy wind-down. The closures underscore the scale of the distributor's retrenchment in markets where a buyer has not been secured.
- [RNDC finds buyer for Indiana operations – The Spirits Business](#)  
A buyer has emerged for RNDC's Indiana operations, providing another path for preserving distribution continuity as the bankrupt wholesaler sells off pieces of its former national network.
- [Martignetti Companies to Acquire Girardi Distributors, LLC Distribution Business – Martignetti Companies](#)  
Martignetti Companies entered into an agreement to acquire Girardi Distributors in Massachusetts. The deal adds another Anheuser-Busch distributorship and expands Martignetti's total-beverage strategy across beer, wine, spirits and alternative products.
- [Saothair Capital Partners Acquires FIFCO USA – FIFCO USA](#)  
Saothair Capital Partners completed its acquisition of FIFCO USA, which will return to the North American Breweries name. The portfolio includes Genesee, Labatt, Seagram's Escapes, Lipton Hard Iced Tea and other regional beer and RTD brands.
- [The World's Drinks Order Is In. Distillers Were Expecting More. – The Wall Street Journal \(\\$\)](#)

Global distillers are confronting large inventories of aged whiskey, cognac and Scotch after years of production decisions made for demand that did not fully materialize. Companies are cutting output and working through inventory while weaker consumption and trade pressures weigh on the category.

- [\*\*Brown-Forman CEO: US whiskey demise 'exaggerated'\*\*](#) – *The Spirits Business*  
Brown-Forman's CEO pushed back on the idea that American whiskey is in long-term decline, arguing that consumer interest remains strong despite current sales pressure and excess inventory across the category.
- [\*\*The Ex-Beer Baron Turning Windshield Repair Into a \\$7.8 Billion-a-Year Empire\*\*](#) – *Bloomberg (\$)*  
Former AB InBev CEO Carlos Brito is preparing global vehicle-glass company Belron for a potential public listing, applying the operating discipline that defined his long career in beer to a very different consumer-services business.



#### **Business & Market Watch**

- [\*\*The \\$20 Cocktail Is Changing More Than What People Order at Bars\*\*](#) – *Food & Wine*  
Bar operators are adapting to higher menu prices and lower drinking frequency by emphasizing entertainment, hospitality, social connection, cover charges and more efficient drink formats. The article argues that customers still want to go out, but increasingly expect more than just alcohol for the price.
- [\*\*Gen Z is drinking less, but what is replacing alcohol?\*\*](#) – *Ynetnews*  
The article examines whether alcohol's declining role in young adults' social lives is being replaced by fitness, screens, cannabis, gambling and other behaviors, while noting that bars remain important gathering places even as alcohol becomes less central.
- [\*\*Why Beer and Alcohol Stocks Are No Bargain\*\*](#) – *Barron's (\$)*  
Barron's argues that falling valuations across beer and spirits companies may reflect structural rather than purely cyclical problems, including lower alcohol participation among younger consumers, cannabis substitution and growth in nonalcoholic beverages.
- [\*\*China's Largest Liquor Maker Faces Record Losses\*\*](#) – *Chiang Rai Times*  
Kweichow Moutai is confronting unusually weak demand for premium baijiu as China's economy slows and younger consumers pull back from traditional drinking occasions. Price cuts and rising inventories illustrate broader pressure on the country's luxury spirits market.
- [\*\*Big Tobacco turns to more potent nicotine pouches in battle for US\*\*](#) – *Financial Times (\$)*  
Tobacco companies are introducing higher-strength nicotine pouches as

competition intensifies in a fast-growing U.S. category. The trend illustrates how adjacent adult-product markets are innovating rapidly as cigarette use declines.

---

### Associate Member Spotlight



#### **National Beer Wholesalers Association**

The National Beer Wholesalers Association represents America's 3,000 independent beer distributors, which operate in every state, congressional district and media market in the country. Beer distributors connect brewers and importers with licensed retailers, build brands, support consumer choice and provide more than 135,000 jobs in communities nationwide. NBWA also leads industry programs focused on responsibility, workforce development, human-trafficking prevention and distributor best practices. [Visit NBWA »](#)

---

### States

- [CA: How Did 40,000 Pounds of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer Disappear in One Morning?](#) – *Ascendants*  
Authorities are investigating two cargo pickups from an Anheuser-Busch distribution center in Montclair, California, involving roughly \$70,000 in missing goods, including a truck carrying an estimated 40,000 pounds of Pabst Blue Ribbon.
- [CA: Lodi grape harvest begins weeks ahead of schedule as wine industry struggles continue](#) – *CBS Sacramento*  
Lodi growers began harvesting grapes weeks earlier than normal after a warm spring and light crop accelerated ripening. The early harvest comes as California's wine industry continues to struggle with weak demand and oversupply.
- [CA: New California law opens farmers markets to more wineries. What it means for Paso Robles](#) – *The Tribune via Yahoo*  
A new California law will allow more wineries to sell and offer tastings at certified farmers markets, including wineries that use grapes grown by other producers rather than only estate-grown fruit.
- [KY: Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of Kentucky Announces Rebranding to Kentucky Licensed Beverage Distributors Association](#) – *Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of Kentucky*  
The Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of Kentucky announced plans to rebrand as the Kentucky Licensed Beverage Distributors Association, reflecting members'

increasing involvement in beer, RTDs and cannabis-infused beverages while reaffirming support for the three-tier system.

- **[MA: Mass. officials target underage alcohol sales near colleges](#)** – *WWLP*  
Massachusetts regulators launched the annual Operation Safe Campus enforcement campaign targeting underage sales and false IDs in college communities as students return for the fall semester.
- **[NJ: New Jersey makes cocktails to-go permanent under new law](#)** – *CBS New York*  
New Jersey made pandemic-era cocktails-to-go privileges permanent, allowing restaurants, bars and certain other businesses to sell sealed alcoholic beverages for off-premise consumption.
- **[NV: Las Vegas restaurants can now apply for alcohol to-go endorsement](#)** – *FOX5 Vegas*  
Las Vegas restaurants licensed for on-premise alcohol service can now apply for an endorsement allowing sealed alcoholic beverages to-go when sold with a meal.
- **[OR: Proposal to allow Oregon grocery stores to sell hard liquor advances](#)** – *KOIN*  
An Oregon ballot proposal that would allow grocery stores to sell distilled spirits advanced after the secretary of state certified its title. Supporters would still need to gather signatures before the proposal could reach the 2028 ballot.
- **[PR: Bill would require ID for every alcohol sale in Puerto Rico](#)** – *News Is My Business*  
A Puerto Rico Senate bill would require retailers to check photo identification for every alcohol sale, regardless of apparent age, and would allow license suspensions for businesses that repeatedly sell to minors.
- **[VA: Richmond pushes to lower Virginia's blood alcohol limit](#)** – *12 On Your Side*  
Richmond's Safe and Healthy Streets Commission is urging Virginia lawmakers to lower the state's legal BAC limit from 0.08 to 0.05 as part of the city's Vision Zero traffic-safety agenda.
- **[WA: Board considers extending alcohol pilot program at WSU's Martin Stadium with stricter enforcement](#)** – *The Spokesman-Review*  
Washington regulators considered extending Washington State University's stadium alcohol pilot while adding stricter enforcement, reduced sales areas and new measures addressing fan conduct and responsible consumption.



### 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

- [Tourists being urged to get the beers in to save Spanish brewers and bars with Spaniards drinking less](#) – *Majorca Daily Bulletin*  
Spanish beer consumption outside the home has fallen sharply since 2022, leaving brewers and bars increasingly reliant on tourism and growth in nonalcoholic options to offset weaker domestic demand.
- [‘Government must act on cheap alcohol sales’](#) – *Beer Today*  
A new U.K. report argues that increasingly affordable supermarket alcohol is contributing to pressure on pubs as drinking shifts from the on-trade to the home. Publicans surveyed called for action to narrow the price gap between pubs and off-trade outlets.
- [Half of Brits are put off going to the pub by high alcohol prices, worrying new poll shows](#) – *The Sun*  
More than half of respondents in a U.K. poll said high alcohol prices deter them from visiting pubs, adding to pressure on hospitality operators and calls for lower alcohol duty.
- [More than 300 pubs have closed in Cork since 2005](#) – *Irish Examiner*  
A new report finds more than 300 pubs have closed in County Cork since 2005, part of a broader Irish trend in which roughly one in four pubs has disappeared over the past two decades.
- [To shelve or not to shelve: How the American alcohol response varies widely by province](#) – *CBC via Yahoo*  
The availability of U.S. alcohol now varies widely across Canadian provinces, ranging from full availability in Alberta to continued removal from major provincial retail systems such as Ontario’s LCBO.
- [‘Policy intention is becoming much clearer’ on digital ID for UK alcohol sales](#) – *Biometric Update*  
New U.K. guidance clarifies how certified digital proof of age could be used for alcohol sales, including at self-service checkouts, as the government moves closer to allowing digital identification under mandatory licensing conditions.

---

## Back Bar

- [Over-40s are the last generation of regular drinkers](#) – *The Telegraph* (\$) Research drawing on data from nearly 1.7 million people found a sharp age divide in drinking habits, with younger adults drinking less frequently and consuming smaller quantities than older generations.
- [The Rise of Intelligent Wine Buying: Why Consumers Are Drinking Less but Better](#) – *Food & Beverage Outlook*  
The article argues that wine consumers are becoming more selective as overall consumption declines, creating an opportunity for retailers to use personalization and AI-assisted recommendations to make wine discovery easier and more relevant.
- [Drunk online shopping is big business – but who is responsible?](#) – *The Conversation via Capital Media*  
Researchers estimate intoxicated consumers generate billions of dollars in online purchases each year and argue that digital retailers may increasingly face ethical questions about whether they should detect, delay or otherwise mitigate purchases made by visibly impaired shoppers.
- [Craft beer enters a new era](#) – *Food Dive*  
Craft brewers are adjusting to a post-hazy-IPA market by emphasizing classic beer styles, taproom experiences, flexible ABV choices and products beyond traditional beer. Operators say experience and community are becoming as important as novelty.
- [This Is the No. 1 Beer in America, According to a New Report](#) – *Food & Wine via AOL*  
A new analysis of Google search interest ranks Michelob Ultra as the most popular beer in the United States, followed by Bud Light, Stella Artois, Budweiser and Guinness.

---

## Calendar

- 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
- October 1-2** WSWA Annual Membership Forum – Chicago, IL

|                          |                                                                                            |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>October 4-8</b>       | Tavern League of Wisconsin Fall Convention & Trade Show – Wisconsin Dells, WI              |
| <b>October 4-8</b>       | Wine & Spirits Guild of America Meeting – Willamette Valley, OR                            |
| <b>October 8</b>         | 43rd Annual Market Watch Leaders Awards Banquet – New York, NY                             |
| <b>October 11-13</b>     | ABL Fall Board of Directors Meeting – Orlando, FL                                          |
| <b>October 11-14</b>     | NBWA 89th Annual Convention & Product Showcase – Orlando, FL                               |
| <b>October 13</b>        | New York State Liquor Store Association Holiday Trade Show – Albany, NY                    |
| <b>October 13-14</b>     | BREW & Alliance for Women in Beer: Making Moves – Orlando, FL                              |
| <b>October 15</b>        | New York State Liquor Store Association Holiday Trade Show – Buffalo, NY                   |
| <b>October 19-20</b>     | Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. Legislative & Board Meeting – Washington, DC         |
| <b>October 19-20</b>     | Tennessee Wine & Spirits Retailers Association Annual Conference – Nashville, TN           |
| <b>October 26</b>        | Metropolitan Package Store Association Annual Dinner – Howard Beach, NY                    |
| <b>October 28</b>        | New Jersey Liquor Stores Association Trade Show – Edison, NJ                               |
| <b>November 2</b>        | The Retailers Alliance Foundation of New York 56th Annual Dinner Dance – Chelsea Piers, NY |
| <b>November 9-11</b>     | NBWA 13th Annual Next Generation Leadership Conference – San Diego, CA                     |
| <b>April 17-19, 2027</b> | 2027 ABL Annual Meeting – Omni Louisville Hotel – Louisville, KY                           |



## 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](http://www.ablusa.org).

**American Beverage Licensees**

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

Phone: (301) 656-1494

[www.ABLUSA.org](http://www.ABLUSA.org)

If you would like to unsubscribe: **click here**

---