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Virginia distillers are getting a boost from Richmond after Governor Ralph Northam signs a new law.

NBC 29
April 1, 2019

Virginia distillers are getting a boost from Richmond.

A new law signed by Governor Ralph Northam will double the maker’s commission earned on each bottle. Thanks to that new law, distillers said they expect to see more of their kind entering the business.

Distilleries across the commonwealth are rapidly growing. Virginia has more distilleries than Kentucky and Tennessee.

“I think there’s some sense within the General Assembly that we’re trying to encourage this kind of industry,” said Delegate David Toscano, 57th District.

A new law signed by Governor Northam will help some of those businesses bring in more cash to cover overhead costs.

“It will allow us to establish more programs for consumers. Hopefully, we’ll be able to hire a few more people too just keep increasing the experience for travelers and locals,” said Sarah Craun, with the Virginia Distillery Company.

Beginning July 1, distillers will get a 20% commission from products sold on-site. That more than doubles the 8% commission they received prior to the new law.

“We’ve done a lot to help the craft brewers, a lot to help the vineyards. We haven’t done as much to help the distilleries,” said Toscano. “I think this is a good sign that we’re trying to level the playing field to make sure that these people can compete with these other industries that are popping up all over Virginia.”

Distilleries operate under a different business model than wineries and breweries.

“We have to operate under control state laws, so we’re really operating as a Virginia ABC Store,” said Craun.

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority gets a portion of profits even when someone buys a bottle directly from a distillery. That increased commission helps off-set that.

“The overhead for an ABC store isn’t quite as high as it would be here when we have to have more staff to cover guest tasting. With increasing business, we have from travelers in the area and local people coming out for the day it will help us be a little bit more in line with how breweries and wineries operate,” said Craun.

The new law will take effect on July 1. It will also allow some ABC stores and distilleries open their doors two hours earlier on Sundays.

NC: City opposes privatized liquor sales

Daily Advance
By Jon Hawley, Staff Writer
April 1, 2019

Reacting to continuing efforts to privatize liquor sales, the Elizabeth City City Council voted last week to support of North Carolina’s current, government-controlled ABC stores.

The current Alcohol Beverage Control system generates important local revenues and privatizing liquor sales would lead to “many adverse effects,” states a resolution the council approved unanimously last week, and with no discussion. The local ABC Board has requested the city take a stand on the issue because it expects another push in the General Assembly to privatize sales, according to a report from City Manager Rich Olson.
Pasquotank County commissioners are set to consider the same resolution during their meeting at 6 p.m. today in the county courthouse.

North Carolina is one of 17 control states that sells liquor under ABC Commission oversight and through local ABC boards, according to the commission’s website. Based on numbers included in the resolution, controlling liquor sales is very profitable for the state.

In the last budget year, local ABC boards distributed more than $430 million statewide, with $323 million to the state general fund and $80 million in city and county distributions, according to the resolution.

Olson’s report also notes ABC revenues have steadily grown for the city, and it expects to get $210,000 in liquor sales over the 2019-2020 budget year.

The resolution also cites a state report released last month that reviewed the ABC system and considered, but recommended against, privatization. That report found that, among southeastern states, North Carolina collects the most revenue per gallon of liquor sold, has the lowest density of liquor stores, and has the “second lowest adult per capita liquor consumption.”

The resolution also reports that, after Washington state privatized its liquor sales, it saw a proliferation of liquor stores and only received about $31 million from auctioning off permit rights. Notably, published reports explain Washington state has not lost money from privatizing liquor, thanks primarily to maintaining very high taxes on it.

In interviews this week, local lawmakers generally praised the current ABC system, though one also said he believes privatization is coming sooner or later.

Sen. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, said he’s seen both sides of the liquor debate, noting he once lived in New York, where liquor sales are private.

Steinburg continued that, despite being a conservative Republican who believes in free markets, he supported the ABC system. Liquor is a “unique commodity,” and the ABC system has generally handled it well.

Steinburg also suggested many citizens are concerned that privatization would lead to a rise in liquor consumption, and the consequences that may follow it.

“I think most people in the district don’t want to see a proliferation of liquor being sold,” he said. He added that, while privatization might cause a short-term surge in sales and revenues, that would ultimately be offset by other costs and problems, such as increased policing.

Steinburg also said that, to his knowledge, lawmakers now are discussing reforming the ABC system, rather than privatizing it. Steinburg said he hasn’t reviewed those proposals yet, and so wasn’t decided on them.

In a brief interview Friday, Rep. Howard Hunter III, D-Hertford, said he opposed privatizing liquor sales as well. The revenues generated are too important to local governments, he said.

Rep. Ed Goodwin, R-Chowan, also said he knows how important ABC revenues are to local governments, citing his experience as a county commissioner. He also said he believes the ABC system has generally worked well.

However, Goodwin said he believed liquor sales would eventually be privatized – the liquor industry and other proponents seem to get stronger every year, he said.

He also said he might not oppose privatization, but would want to see the pros and cons.

Reports from the Asheville Citizen Times identify Sen. Chuck Edwards and Rep. Chuck McGrady, both Republicans of Henderson, as two leading proponents for privatization, or at least reforms, of the ABC system. The General Assembly’s website also shows McGrady has filed House Bill 91 to “modernize” ABC laws; Hunter and Rep. Bobby Hanig, R-Currituck, are among co-sponsors.

H91’s provisions include repealing permits for purchase or transportation of liquor in large quantities, enabling special orders of specific liquors not on the ABC Commission’s list, giving local governments the ability to allow ABC stores to be open on Sundays, and allowing in-store liquor tastings.
A new West Virginia law aims to foster the growth and expansion of the craft beer industry while eliminating certain burdensome regulatory requirements. On March 26, 2019, Governor Jim Justice signed Senate Bill 529 enacting the changes and reforms made to previous craft beer legislation. SB 529 is now slated to take effect 90 days from passage.

Effective June 6, 2019, SB 529:

- Increases the maximum alcohol by volume (ABV) content from 12.0% to 15.0%;
- Increases the maximum size for growlers to 128 ounces;
- Removes the prior limitation on daily sales of growlers from a maximum of two gallons per patron per day (prior limits allowed two growlers or four howlers);
- Creates a temporary one-day floor extension to an existing license for certain retailers to provide craft beer events on adjacent spaces (either indoors or outdoors);
- Allows complimentary sampling by certain growler licensees;
- Imposes a maximum 30-day period for approval or denial of a clean license application by the Commissioner of the Alcohol Beverage Control Administration (ABCA) and provides for a reactivation fee for licenses which were not timely filed;
- Allows certain retailers to deliver beer to customers in the adjacent parking lot (allows grocery chains that provide food pre-order services to deliver beer to the customer outside);
- Requires brewers to get a permit for their trucks transporting their beer;
- Requires craft brewers to register their representatives;
- Creates a new special license for one-day charitable events called a Class S-1 Special Events License which will support smaller charitable beer events (regular Class S licenses are still available for non-charitable events); and
- Eliminates bond required for brewers, resident brewers, distributors, and brew pubs.

These changes were advanced by a broad collation of stakeholders, including craft brewers, distilleries, retailers, distributors and craft beer enthusiasts alike, and are the most significant changes to the licensure and regulatory requirements for craft beer since 2015 when the “Growler Bill” was passed.

Recent newspaper articles describe craft brewers and distilleries are excited about the prospects of further expansion in the industry. The Brewers Association reports the estimated impact of the craft beer industry in West Virginia in 2017 was over $300 million. To further boost these efforts, the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded a grant to the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI), who will administer the grant in conjunction with the Charleston Area Alliance, Putnam County Economic Development Authority, Huntington Area Development Corporation, Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce, BridgeValley Community and Technical College, and the Marshall University Research Corporation to support a proposed craft beer and spirits trail in Cabell, Putnam, Roane, Jackson and Kanawha Counties.
WV: Tolsia High students recognized by West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice

The Herald-Dispatch
By Luke Creasy
April 1, 2019

GLENHAYES, W.Va. - "Don't miss moments that matter for ones that don't."

That catch phrase appeared at the very end of a 30-second public service announcement that won first place in the 6th annual "NO School Spirits" PSA contest put on by the West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration.

Contest entries aimed to speak out against the act of drinking and driving, particularly targeting a high school-aged audience as prom and graduation seasons are fast approaching. Those two events alone can blossom into gardens of trouble when students introduce drugs and alcohol into the mix to celebrate such occasions.

"The ABCA is dedicated to ensuring that the citizens of West Virginia are aware of the dangers that come with the abuse of alcohol and from drinking and driving. We believe the students at Tolsia High School have produced a valuable message that will reach youth across this state and our bordering states," WVABCA Commissioner Fred Wooten said.

About 150 middle and high school students in 20 schools throughout the state submitted video entries this year focused on the theme. Tolsia's winning entry will be aired on television and radio stations throughout West Virginia and surrounding states beginning this month and running until the end of the school year.

In its first year as a part of the Career and Technical Education Simulated Workplace program at Tolsia, the students in the "Glenhayes Entertainment" Broadcast Journalism class were recognized by Gov. Jim Justice among others and presented a check for $5,000 during a ceremony at the school Monday afternoon.

"Just to tell it like it is, many of you don't really get the gravity of the situation, but what you guys have done will actually save lives," Justice said to the students in the broadcast journalism class. "How many people in this country do you think wake up and say 'Today is the day that I'm going to get killed on the highway!' Probably none, but yet you know that there are as many people killed on highways every year that are killed in all of the Vietnam War. At the end of the day, it's just sad."

Team leader and Tolsia senior Kacie Stacy said the team got together and brainstormed ideas for their entry, coming up with a few different goals to create a realistic product. The video PSA showed a student chugging apple juice out of a glass bottle before reaching for his keys and leaving a room full of his peers.

"We started looking at some examples and getting ideas of what we wanted to do differently," Stacy said. "One of the things we really wanted to do was to show the seriousness of the situation through the eyes of a student. So many of the examples we watched show the parents reaction being arrested for drinking and driving or dying in a car accident.

"While that's a reality sometimes, the gravity (of the situation) is lost on kids and young adults," Stacy continued. "We have real milestones and goals that we want to accomplish in life and have to make smart choices to live for the moments that matter."

Glenhayes Entertainment instructor Justin Prince said the $5,000 in prize money will be used to purchase new computers and editing software for the students to use, allowing them to produce high quality content from inside the classroom.
LICENSE STATE NEWS

CA: San Diego County Law Enforcement Opposes Increase in Alcohol Sales Hours

Times of San Diego
Posted By Lauren J. Mapp
April 1, 2019

Warning that the change would pose serious threats to public health and safety, the San Diego County Police Chiefs’ and Sheriff’s Association announced on Monday its opposition to a state bill that proposes extending California’s daily alcohol sales cutoff time from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m.

Chula Vista Police Chief Roxana Kennedy, president of the law enforcement group, asserted that Senate Bill 58 — which calls for allowing bars in 10 cities throughout the state to keep serving drinks for an extra two hours a day as part of a pilot project — would have negative effects on communities “that are within driving distance of the cities where the bars (would) stay open later.”

“Extending alcohol sales means more drunk drivers during early-morning commutes, more DUI crashes, more injuries and more deaths,” Kennedy said, adding that the change would “impact our ability to respond quickly to other emergencies.”

Under SB 58, bars in Cathedral City, Coachella, Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Palm Springs, Sacramento, San Francisco and West Hollywood would be cleared to remain open two hours longer each night.

The change would affect more than three-quarters of the state’s population, according to a letter sent from the police association to the author of the bill, Sen. Scott Weiner, D-San Francisco.

Weiner introduced the proposed legislation in December, three months after outgoing Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed a similar bill.

Proponents contend that the change would be an economic boon for areas with vibrant night-life scenes and high tourism levels.

Alcohol-related problems cost California more than $37 billion annually, including expenses related to public safety, crime, street collisions, injuries and illnesses, the San Diego-area law enforcement agency stated, citing studies by the nonprofit Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

That fiscal hit would increase dramatically under the proposed extended alcohol-sales hours, resulting in an estimated 230 percent increase in fatalities and a 179 percent increase in injury traffic crashes, according to the association.

KS: As Strong Beer Rolls Into Kansas Grocery Stores, Liquor Retailers Prepare To Adapt

HPPR
By Nadya Faulx
April 1, 2019

Starting Monday, full strength beer – up to 6 percent alcohol content – will be available in grocery and convenience stores across Kansas.

It’s a change two years in the making: Lawmakers passed a compromise bill in 2017, after decades of discussions and efforts to change the state’s liquor laws.

"In a sense, it feels like Prohibition is finally over here in Kansas," said Ron Wallis, personnel manager for QuikTrip in Wichita. "Those old-fashioned laws and limits that were placed on beer many, many years ago have finally been updated."
Kansas was one of the last states with 3.2 beer limits. QuikTrip has sold cereal malt beverage for about 60 years, Wallis said, but the stores have been working to sell out of the remaining product as they make room for stronger beer to hit the coolers.

He says the potential for new revenue is "huge."

"This is something that our customers are very excited about," Wallis said. "We’re going to be able to sell products we’ve never been able to carry before.

"We’re going to be able to focus on more local and regional breweries. We’re going to be able to carry craft beers that we haven’t been able to in the past."

Wallis says the new law "levels the playing field."

"It's going to be different for a lot of businesses in Kansas."

As part of the compromise reached with the advocacy group Uncork Kansas -- which lobbied for the change -- liquor stores will now be allowed to sell more non-alcoholic products, such as mixers, shot glasses and snacks.

But Brian Davis, director of the Kansas Association of Beverage Retailers, said it’s unlikely those sales will make up for lost beer revenue.

"The bad part about this compromise is that ... liquor stores are going to close," he said. "Kansas-owned businesses will close."

Davis' family owns three liquor stores in Wichita. He says they’ll update their stores gradually, rearranging the floor to bring in new products.

"We’re not trying to get anything done on (April 1)," he said. "We’ve got computer things that need to get done. There’s a lot of behind-the-scenes that we’ve been working on."

Davis said as a retailer himself, he can see the benefit of bringing in new products and giving his stores a different look. The stores that succeed under the new law will be the ones that can adapt, he says.

"We as retailers are just going to have to learn to make changes," he said. "As the years come, we’ll be able to grow what we’re keeping. We’ll have a better familiarity with how to market having different items."

The law is limited to beer, and it excludes any product with an alcohol content higher than 6 percent. The issue isn't in front of the Kansas Legislature this session, but Wallis with QuikTrip says in the future, he'd like to see stores like his sell other types of alcohol, too.

"We are hopeful that one day those limits will be eliminated on alcohol content for beer," he said, "and one day possibly that we can carry products like wine."

Davis says his group had a "handshake and a verbal agreement" with Uncork Kansas as the two sides worked to reach the compromise in 2017, but that won't stop other national chains from possibly reviving the fight to further loosen Kansas' liquor laws. But he says he and others in the industry are ready to once again push back against those efforts.

"I'm expecting in the next few years that we'll have to fight again," he said.

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**WA: New bill aims to dissolve Washington Liquor and Cannabis Board**

MyNorthwest
By MyNorthwest Staff
March 29, 2019

“Countless licensees are increasingly becoming frustrated with the lack of assistance and help at the Liquor and Cannabis Board, and that the Liquor and Cannabis Board prefers to penalize its licensees for administrative or technical violations, rather than helping them comply,” the bill reads.

McEwen proposes to dissolve the Liquor and Cannabis Board. In its place would be a governor-appointed director, confirmed by the state Senate. Once that happens, the bill would put money saved by the measure to “ensure the marijuana traceability system is fully functional and operational.”

In the past, Washington state’s traceability system for the cannabis industry has proved problematic, with many businesses complaining about a lack of transparency concerning data collected by the state.

In February 2018, the system was hacked shortly after it was launched, and many felt as though it was rushed to completion far before it was ready for the public.

A February 2019 report from The Stranger cited a “toxic” culture within the Liquor and Cannabis Board, with a bipartisan group of 10 state lawmakers (including Rep. McEwen) calling on Gov. Jay Inslee to rescind his nomination of Russ Hauge, an agency board member.

A committee meeting with Hauge in late-January saw a series of combative exchanges take place between him and legislators, who later claimed Hauge was “either ignorant of facts, or purposely did not tell the truth.”

McEwen’s bill to dissolve the board was introduced Thursday in the Washington State House of Representatives.

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**INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

India: Private liquor shops to take couple of days to be functional

*The Pioneer*

PNS | Ranchi

April 2, 2019

Consumer will have to wait for another couple days to buy liquor from private retail shops due to closure of banks on Monday and other process that delayed liquor shop license holders to open their shops on due date, which was April 01.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) gave green signal for opening of over 1,350 new private run retail liquor shops across the State on Sunday. The department started distributing licenses one after one to the shop-owners on Monday. After getting their licenses the holder will apply for the permission to open liquor shop on given spot and it will also take a day or two.

After getting the permission the license holder will submit a fixed amount to get their liquor stock for the shop. To procure liquor stock from Jharkhand State Beverages Corporation Limited the shop owners will apply at same time and it will again be difficult for the corporation to provide liquor stocks.

The sale timing for private retail shops would be from 11 AM to 11 PM as opposed to 1 PM to 10 PM, which was the timing for government shops.

The annual revenue target from the shops for Year 2019-20 has been set for Rs. 1,558 crore, which is Rs 558 crore more than the target of Rs. 1000 crore for Financial Year 2018-19.

Worried over the loss of revenue State government would have to face if the private liquor shops did not start from April 1, the State Excise and Prohibition Department sought permission from the ECI for starting the shops on the said time, instead of waiting two months for the Lok Sabha elections to get over.

Also, if the liquor shops remain closed it will create a disruption in the supply chain, leading to illegal manufacture and sale which might be hazardous.
Backing up the department’s request, the Chief Electoral Officer of Jharkhand wrote in the letter to ECI that denial of opening of new shops will bring a loss of Rs. 200 crore in April and May and will also lead to illicit liquor business, leading to adverse law and order situation in the State which may affect smooth conduct of election.

Canada: Frustration mounts for private retailers who want to sell cannabis in Vancouver area

CityNews
By Marcella Bernardo
April 1, 2019

VANCOUVER (NEWS 1130) – Nearly six months after the drug became legal, private marijuana sales have yet to be approved in the Lower Mainland.

Some retailers waiting for clearance from the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch say they’ve been told it could be months before Vancouver and other nearby cities can give buyers a legal alternative to what’s available on the black market.

Dana Larsen, who operates two dispensaries in Vancouver, says he’s not surprised only three of the 14 licences approved province-wide are in this region.

“It makes it impossible for these kind of shops to open,” he says. “The legal system should be able to out-compete the illegal dispensaries, but it’s regulated so poorly and so restrictively that the black market, I think, is going to thrive and serve a majority of Canadians with their cannabis, probably for many years to come.”

He adds there’s not enough cannabis in stock to supply all the retailers who have already been approved, so he’s not sure he wants to be part of this new system.

“It could be months and, like I said, I have mixed feelings about even joining into the legal system at this time because, if they gave me a permit tomorrow, I’m not sure I would want one. I think it would cause us a lot of problems and more importantly, cause our members and our patients increasingly reduced access, so if I were to go legit or able to get a permit, it would really mean cutting off thousands of people from medicinal cannabis access which isn’t something I’m particularly keen on doing.”

In a statement, the Ministry of the Attorney General tells NEWS 1130 there is no typical length of time for an application to be processed by the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch.

“This is because the opening of private non-medical cannabis retail stores depends on several factors including: the readiness of each individual applicant, the complexity of each application, and the readiness of a local government or Indigenous nation to accept notices of applications and return recommendations to the province,” the statement says. “Therefore, it is difficult to predict how long applications will take to process.”

Larsen says some small business owners have already leased space and their shops are sitting empty while they wait for approval.

“People think having a cannabis shop means you’ve got the golden ticket and you’re going to become a millionaire, but the reality is, getting a legal cannabis shop can mean huge financial challenges and potential bankruptcy.”

He adds the current system is not functional because some suppliers are sending products overseas to buyers willing to pay more for pot grown in Canada.

“So even with the small number of shops that are opened across Canada, some of them are closing, some of them are only able to be open certain days out of the week because there isn’t enough cannabis available to sell.”

Larsen says the only way to get rid of the black market is to offer readily-available, high quality, low-priced products.
Europe: Government cautions against drinking too much wine, the French raise a glass anyways

How could it be otherwise in a country where the relationship to wine is so intimate? Where even the most humble corner grocery is certain to have a decent bottle of Bordeaux

Vancouver Sun
The New York Times
April 2, 2019

PARIS — The government began a publicity campaign this week warning Frenchmen and women of the dangers of too much drink. When it comes to wine and other alcohol, it said, “for your health, it’s maximum two glasses a day, and not every day.”

France’s response? Deafening silence.

The French media hardly bothered to react. Wine producers in the multibillion dollar industry scoffed. The neat rows of wicker chairs outside the ubiquitous cafes continued to buzz with patrons.

How could it be otherwise in a country where the relationship to wine is so intimate? Where even the most humble corner grocery is certain to have a decent bottle of Bordeaux waiting for an emergency?

Where the evening meal (and sometimes the midday meal) are not really meals at all without a bottle of wine on the table? Where even the president, Emmanuel Macron, reassured the big annual farm fair last year, “Me, I drink wine at noon, and at night.”?

He added, pointedly, “Don’t give the French a hard time,” in a nod to one of his predecessors, Georges Pompidou, who first used the phrase.

Another predecessor, Pierre Mendès-France, tried to promote milk consumption instead, in the 1950s. That was a big flop. The populist rabble-rouser Pierre Poujade responded, “You, Mr. Mendès, have inflicted a blow on every Frenchman.”

Without going that far, several esteemed wine producers insisted Thursday that the scolds from the state’s public health agency, who now say that a quarter of the French exceed the recommended limit, are missing the point.

Alcohol is a principal cause of avoidable death in France, the agency warned. No, wine is the opposite of death, the producers answered.

It is about three essential elements of French life, they said: liberty, fraternity and the pursuit of pleasure.

“Look, we agree with the moderation aspect, but on the other hand, we always feel that they’re picking on wine,” said Maurin Bérenger, a well-respected producer of the rich dark Cahors wine, in southwest France. “Even limiting it, this is a constraint on liberty,” he said.

“The wine that we’re producing and that we champion, it’s to be consumed for pleasure, with moderation, and not to get drunk,” Bérenger said. He is one of thousands of wine producers in one of the bibles of French life, Le Guide Hachette des Vins, which tells you just about everything you need to know before you drink. (Regions, grapes, pairing ...)

French wine consumption has had its ups and downs. Even without the public health warning, in the last half-century it has declined by about 50 percent, according to Vin et Société, a consortium of wine industry actors.

The old culture of the workman sidling up to the bar in the local cafe at 10 a.m. and demanding his small glass of red wine, or “petit rouge,” is far less prevalent, if it still exists at all.

But a prewar marketing slogan still captures the essential spirit of wine’s place in French culture: “Wine is the sacred foodstuff that alights the fire of the French soul.”

Véronique Desfontaine, who produces a succulent and subtle Burgundy with her two sons at Chamilly, was baffled by the health agency’s declaration.

Consuming wine is about sharing. The French drink wine because, for instance, they might have friends over,
“I don’t agree with it at all,” she said. “Consuming wine is about sharing. The French drink wine because, for instance, they might have friends over,” she said. “They want to drink well. This is about quality.”

She pointed out — and Vin et Société agrees — that most French wine drinking takes place around the dinner table, to accompany the meal.

“Consuming wine at the table, this is the specific French cultural model,” said Vin et Société’s delegate-general, Krystel Lepresle. “It’s a cultural object,” she insisted.

She and Desfontaine were too polite to say so, but the Anglo-Saxon culture of drinking to get drunk is far less present in French life, though not entirely absent.

“The government says, ‘don’t drink.’ But were talking about another category of people here,” she said, confident that “those who appreciate quality wines won’t be affected by this publicity, no, not at all.”

Bérenger, speaking from deepest rural France in the rolling hills of the Quercy region, sounded a frequently heard complaint.

“There’s a disconnect between the officials, and what actually goes on in the country,” he said. “And this is very French. They are targeting a whole profession. Very clumsy.”

“They’d be better off educating the young,” he added. “We don’t force people to drink.”

Desfontaines consulted her own experts. “I have excellent customers in the medical community,” she said. “They’re not worried about this.”

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**INDUSTRY NEWS**

**Craft Brands Garner More Social Media Engagement Than Larger Brands In New Study**

Forbes
By Jeanette Hurt, Contributor
April 1, 2019

A new report on social media influencers and the alcohol industry reveals that craft brands tend to promote more engagement among followers than larger mass market brands.

The State of Influence: Spirits, Beer and Wine report examined an entire year’s worth of online conversations around alcohol brands as told by more than 9,000 notable food and beverage influencers. In this report, Traackr, an influencer relationship management platform, looked at some of the spirits trends in influencer content from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018 on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other, additional social networks.

During this time period, Traackr analyzed all of the mentions of alcoholic products, how influencers mentioned them and how their followers engaged in those mentions. “Over the years, we have built a database of influential people whom we track all of their content all of the time on any given topics, and we are constantly tracking who influences the influencers,” says Pierre-Loic Assayag, CEO and co-founder of Tracker. "We have a pretty unique methodology on how we approach the measurements around the influencer community."

To qualify for inclusion, an influencer needed to produce content related to more than 100 keywords on beverages and have an audience interested in common beverage and foodie topics (cocktails, wine, beer, bars, mixology, restaurants, etc.). Further, influencers were required to have a minimum percentage of their audience located in key markets in North America and Europe. Brands were selected and then analyzed using Traackr’s Analytics Influence Reporting tool. Data was pulled in January 2019.

As social media becomes one of the primary channels for reaching consumers, alcohol and spirits brands are eager to establish powerful, effective and compliant influencer programs that speak to target audiences, Assayag says.
Looking solely at share of voice in the beer category, the study found that craft breweries might have fewer activated influencers than commodity breweries, but their influencer posts result in double the engagement than those of larger brands (1.84 for one craft brewery compared to .93 or .65 of two mass market brands).

“This signals a trend we’ve seen across consumer segments. People will pay a premium to associate themselves with brands whose purpose transcends their products,” Assayag says.

In addition to mass market beer, the report summarizes findings from the following alcohol categories: cocktail trends, gin/whiskey/vodka brands, hard cider brands, wine varietals and brands and more. Traackr analyzed the share of influence in activated influencers, mentions and engagements for each brand.

Additional key insights from segments in the report include insights on cocktail trends: classic drinks such as martinis and manhattans lead the cocktail conversations among influencers, but content about margaritas gets the most engagements. Gin and whiskey top the list of spirits garnering mentions and engagements.

In wine, chardonnay leads in influencer mentions, but pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon overtake it in engagement rates (1.92 for chardonnay, 2.24 for pinot noir and 2.05 for cabernet sauvignon).

In beer, Guinness boasts the highest number of activated influencers across all categories, but only has the fourth highest engagement rate among mass market beer brands.

Across brands and alcohol types, engagement matters, Assayag says. “The personality of the brand matters, and craft, independent brands tend to perform disproportionately well compared to mass market brands,” he says. “This to me is a sign that the personality of the brand really matters in generating momentum on social media and with influencers.”

“Alcoholic beverage brands that connect through authentic conversations from trusted sources will stay relevant and continue to grow in the current downturn, while others will be further commoditized and will struggle with sales and margins,” Assayag says.

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**Women of the Vine & Spirits Launches New Benefits to Create Pathways for Supplier Diversity and Market Share for Women-Owned Businesses**

PRNewswire | News Release
NEWS PROVIDED BY Women of the Vine & Spirits
April 1, 2019

NEW YORK, April 1, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Women of the Vine & Spirits, the world’s leading organization dedicated to empowering and advancing women in the alcohol beverage industry, announced today the launch of new Corporate Membership benefits that support women-owned businesses and supplier diversity programs.

Women of the Vine & Spirits is committed to raising awareness for why, where and how to buy women-owned products and services to further women’s economic growth and gender equality on a global scale. The Certified Women Owned Logo and Database is a game-changer for buyers, wholesalers, and consumers to easily identify certified women-owned brands in the alcohol beverage industry.

In the U.S., 71 percent of wine retail purchases are currently made by women. A study conducted by Walmart, America’s largest retailer, found that 90 percent of female customers in the U.S. would go out of their way to purchase products from women. A recent study by Wine Intelligence and Women of the Vine & Spirits showed that women are more likely to purchase wines made by female winemakers when this fact is consciously pointed out to them in an explicit way.

"Women control over $20 trillion of annual consumer spending globally and trillions of dollars are spent worldwide annually on diverse suppliers, yet less than one percent goes to women-owned companies," said Deborah Brenner, Founder & CEO of Women of the Vine & Spirits. "Certification is key to getting visible. It is our goal to create a movement of support in the three-tier system for women-owned businesses and be the go-to resource in the alcohol beverage industry."
In time for the launch, Women of the Vine & Spirits is proud to announce that three of their Corporate Members, Opici Family Distributing, GAP Promo and BuzzBallz, LLC, are the first to be approved and take advantage of the new benefits.

"BuzzBallz, LLC is thrilled to be part of Women of the Vine & Spirits," said Tracy Frisbie, Vice President of Marketing of Buzzballz, LLC. "We will gain the attention of wholesalers and retailers for our unique brands and nimble capabilities. BuzzBallz has been a registered NWBOC organization since 2015, and WBENC since 2016. Both organizations have been helpful in growing our business but having a specific alcohol industry women-owned certification through Women of the Vine & Spirits will assist BuzzBallz to compete with larger suppliers."

Corporate Members of Women of the Vine & Spirits who are at least 51 percent owned, managed, and controlled by a woman and become certified by WBENC or WEConnect International as a Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE), have the ability to apply for the Women of the Vine & Spirits Certified Women Owned Logo and will be featured in the Certified Women Owned Database.

For more information, visit the Certified Women Owned page at womenofthevine.com.

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**DAILY NEWS**

**Regulations Help Keep American Alcohol Safe to Drink (blog)**

NBWA
By Craig Purser, NBWA President and CEO
April 1, 2019

Recently, the U.S. State Department issued a warning to spring breakers headed to Mexico - beware of tainted, unregulated alcohol. Here in the United States, consumers can have confidence that the alcohol they purchase is safe. That is no accident. Our regulatory system for alcohol helps prevent the sale of illicit and counterfeit goods and stands in stark contrast to the recurring tragedy of deaths from fake alcohol in other countries.

In February, sad news made headlines: bootleg alcohol killed nearly 250 people in two separate incidents in India. While shocking, these unfortunate news stories are not uncommon around the world. Last year, similar tragedies took place in Indonesia and Malaysia. Closer to home, American tourists vacationing in Mexico have suffered dangerous reactions and even died after being served unregulated alcohol.

The strong relationships built between trusted community partners are also a large part of why the system has been successful. Supplier, distributor and retailer partners in our communities work diligently to protect both public health and the integrity of the products they sell. That commitment shows in the confidence Americans enjoy when it comes to the safety of their purchases. Our system is designed to keep potentially deadly products off the market by separating and licensing the companies that produce or import alcohol, distribute alcohol to licensed retailers, and sell alcohol to consumers. Keeping these responsibilities independent ensures the chain of custody provides oversight and transparency so buyers can trust that the alcohol they are purchasing is genuine and safe. It also provides traceability should a product need to be removed from the marketplace.

In a national poll gauging attitudes about alcohol, the non-profit Center for Alcohol Policy found that 89 percent of adults agree that it is very important to keep the American alcohol industry regulated. The Center's Executive Director Mike Lashbrook explained it this way: "Americans recognize and agree that when it comes to a unique product such as alcohol, regulation is vital, and they support the states' ability to set their own laws and regulations around alcohol."

With these age-restricted, socially sensitive products, consumers recognize that the process to get alcohol to market must be different than other items on the menu or in their shopping baskets, and it is only becoming more important as counterfeit concerns on e-commerce sites make news here at home.

The United States' regulatory system for alcohol has been carefully considered and time tested to keep Americans safe while at the same time growing the options available for those who want to share a beer with friends. From
longtime favorites to new brews, the Center’s research "shows that consumers are highly satisfied with the choice and variety available to them in the American marketplace," Lashbrook says.

Today the number of permitted breweries in the United States now tops 10,000 according to the U.S. government’s Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. It has never been a better time to be a beer lover.

As America’s independent beer distributors work to provide communities with the choice and variety they have come to expect while also ensuring safety in the marketplace, the State Department’s warning serves as an important reminder. We must continue to safeguard the public safety protections of our alcohol regulation system. The stakes are just too high.

Craig Purser is president and CEO of the National Beer Wholesalers Association in Alexandria, Virginia.

‘Safe’ teen drinking? Here’s why parents shouldn’t facilitate it.
The Washington Post
By Elizabeth Heubeck
April 1, 2019

Correction: An earlier version of this story included an incorrect title for Helen Witty and gave the incorrect age for when her daughter was killed by a drunk driver. Witty is the national president of MADD, and her daughter was 16 when she was killed. The story has been updated.

“Well, we did it when we were their age.”

This common refrain, popular among parents with a permissive attitude toward underage drinking, is often coupled with well-intentioned efforts to keep adolescents safe while consuming alcohol: Think encouraging alcohol-imbibing teens to take advantage of ride programs like Uber, to spend the night at a friend’s house, or to drink in one’s own home as opposed to unknown settings. Referred to by social scientists as “harm reduction,” this strategy is more than just ineffective, say experts. It’s helping to fuel an epidemic of teenage binge drinking.

Although many parents of today’s teenagers drank when they were young, data shows important differences between teen drinking then and now. In 1991, about half of high school students reported consuming alcohol, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2015, less than 18 percent of high-schoolers drank. That 65 percent decline is news to celebrate. But here’s the bad news: Many of today’s teens who drink do so in excess. More than half of high school students who drink alcohol report recent episodes of binge drinking — consuming five or more drinks at a time — according to the CDC.

This comes as no surprise to Joseph LaBrie, a Loyola Marymount University psychology professor and alcohol researcher. “One of the major reasons I see now [for underage drinking] is to black-out, get wasted. That wasn’t the case 20 years ago,” he said.

Most parents don’t want their teens to binge drink. But parents who attempt to provide safe parameters — like having teens drink in the basement with friends — increase the likelihood that their offspring will become binge drinkers. “Parents truly think they’re doing the right thing. This is coming from such a good place,” acknowledged Lindsay Squeglia, an alcohol researcher and professor at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Researchers in the growing field of alcohol research aren’t interested in passing judgment on parents. Rather, they’re eager to share evidence that demonstrates unequivocally why teens benefit from waiting even a few years before they start drinking. Experts also want parents to know they have far more influence over their teens’ decisions regarding alcohol use than they may realize.

Evidence proves teen alcohol use can disrupt brain development

Scare tactics, like films showing crunched cars and the sound of screaming sirens rushing to the scene of a drunken-driving accident, once dominated teen alcohol prevention efforts. But ample evidence shows that these methods are largely ineffective.
It’s easy for teens to disengage from shock tactics — rationalizing, for instance, that a tragedy won’t happen to them, Squeglia says. But factual information presented in a straightforward manner is more effective. “Information is the most powerful tool,” Squeglia said.

Experts say that the human brain isn’t fully formed until adulthood, about the mid-20s. In recent years, scientists have examined images of the adolescent brain that show alcohol’s detrimental effects.

Normal adolescent brain development involves a pruning of gray matter and an increase in white matter, which serves as the brain’s “superhighway” by connecting different regions of the brain. Squeglia’s research examining brains of teens before and after they began to engage in frequent heavy drinking showed more rapid declines in gray matter, and fewer increases in white matter, than in the brains of their nondrinking peers. Heavy-drinking adolescents also performed more poorly on assessments involving attention, working memory, spatial functioning and executive functioning.

Why parents fail to exert their influence

While alcohol researchers like Squeglia have begun to educate teens on how heavy alcohol use can disrupt brain development, experts say those with the biggest influence on adolescents’ decisions regarding alcohol too often fail to exert it.

“Parents are the number one protection against underage drinking,” said Helen Witty, national president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), whose 16-year-old daughter was struck by a 17-year-old drunk driver on a sunny afternoon while she was rollerblading. Multiple studies confirm this. One longitudinal survey of 5,000 teens ages 12 to 19 concluded that teens least prone to heavy drinking had parents who exhibited a combination of warmth and high accountability, e.g., knowing where their teens were. But many parents fail to exert their influence.

Experts say misperceptions are often to blame.

“There are so many myths,” said Loyola Marymount’s LaBrie, including this popular one: If I can teach them to drink at home, they’ll be fine. The idea of teaching teens to drink responsibly is misguided, he explains. A recent review of more than 20 studies on the topic concluded that teens given permission to drink at home are more likely to drink more frequently, and in higher quantities, outside the home. Teens who start drinking early often pay for it later in life. One oft-cited national study showed that people who use alcohol before age 15 are six times more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who begin drinking at age 21.

Another widespread misperception, says LaBrie, is that teenagers who aren’t allowed to drink in high school will “go crazy” in college. While he acknowledges that nondrinking students sometimes come to college and quickly end up in the hospital with alcohol poisoning, these instances are the exception. “The vast majority of kids who don’t drink in high school become very light drinkers in college, compared to kids who started drinking when they were 14, 15,” he said.

Another fallacy commonly believed by parents, LaBrie said, is that other parents’ attitudes toward alcohol are more approving than their own, which can sway them to adjust their own mind-set. “What tends to stand out [to parents] is the one parent who throws a party,” he said.

Getting the message across

“Most parents don’t feel comfortable or competent having conversations about drinking with their kids,” said Rob Vincent, a public health analyst with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which recently launched a nationwide underage-drinking-prevention campaign: Talk. They Hear You.

Vincent says the campaign is a research-backed response to the question: “How do you help parents have a conversation that’s factually correct and engaging in a way that’s not shaming and straining?” For starters, Vincent said, don’t lecture. Instead, have multiple, small conversations that start early, when kids are about 9 years old — well before they’re likely to start experimenting with alcohol.

Even though kids often tune out lectures, LaBrie emphasizes the importance of clearly communicating expectations about alcohol to adolescents. “They’re getting all sorts of harm-reduction messages from all over the
place. What they need from their parents is a values lesson,” he said, while acknowledging that it requires a balancing act in which parents present their stance in a caring context.

“Tell your kid, ‘I want what’s best for you,’ ” LaBrie said.

Should Airlines Consider Banning Alcohol On Aircraft?

Forbes
By Michael Goldstein. Contributor
April 1, 2019

Should airlines ban drinking on some flights? Could never happen, you say? April Fool!

Not exactly. Drunk and out-of-control passengers are becoming a real problem, groping and assaulting flight attendants, fighting other passengers and air marshals, attempting to open the aircraft door mid-flight and attempting to get into the cockpit, among other issues.

To paraphrase the late Rick James, like cocaine, alcohol “is a hell of a drug.”

In 2017, a BBC investigation found that drunk air passenger arrests at UK airports rose 50% over the previous year. In an video posted by the BBC, 14-year Virgin Atlantic flight attendant Ally Murphy said one reason she quit flying were drunk, abusive passengers who groped and swore at her. Once, a “drunk passenger tried to open the plane door.”

Serious alcohol-based incidents continue to occur on board. Just last month, an Australian model was convicted for assaulting a flight attendant on a United flight from Melbourne to Los Angeles in January. According to a press release from the US Department of Justice, the woman, Adau Akui Atem Mornyang, 24, of Victoria, Australia, was convicted of offenses relating to a January 21 incident “in which she appeared to be intoxicated and was verbally and physically abusive to personnel and other passengers during the flight.”

According to the evidence presented at trial, several hours into the flight, passengers approached a flight attendant “to complain about Mornyang’s disruptive behavior, which included flailing her arms and yelling obscenities and racial slurs.” When a flight attendant tried to speak to her, she began shouting at him, then slapped him in the face. The flight attendant attempted to restrain Mornyang until federal air marshals on board could restrain her in the rear galley of the plane for the rest of the flight.

A jury found Mornyang guilty of a felony charge of interference with a flight crew and misdemeanor assault. She faces a maximum sentence of 21 years in federal prison when sentenced this June.

In 2018, a Southwest Airlines flight from Chicago to New Orleans was disrupted by a man who threatened to put a flight attendant into “a body bag” for refusing to serve him a fourth drink on the two-hour flight. The man, Joel Michael Bane of New Jersey, then refused to take his seat for landing. When the pilot did manage to successfully land, Bain assaulted a pair of police officers who had to use stun guns to get him off the plane. Amazingly, Bane, who pleaded guilty to one count of interference with flight crew, was sentenced only to two years of probation and a $3,000 fine.

Also in 2018, a Delta Airlines overnight flight from Salt Lake City to Orlando with 193 people on board had to land in Oklahoma City to meet with police officers, after a passenger headbutted a flight attendant when he too was cut off from booze.

And in 2018, a pilot traveling as a passenger on an Emirates flight asked to smoke on the flight, then slapped the chest of a Romanian flight attendant, threw his shoe at her, cursed at other passengers, then grabbed two beers and more booze from the galley. When finally restrained by crew and other passengers in handcuffs, he threatened the flight and slammed his head so hard against the seatback that the video screen broke.

So would airlines ever consider making alcohol-free flights an option? Unlikely; on-board alcohol is not only a precious perk of flying First or Business Class, but a profit source from economy passengers. That $7 on-board beer probably cost the airline less than a dollar, certainly a financially compelling proposition.
While flyers like myself find drinking a good way to deal with today’s flying conditions, in-flight incidents do not seem to be going away. Instead, they seem to be getting more frequent, disturbing and violent.

According to the British Civil Aviation Authority, there were 417 reports of serious disruption on flights in 2017, up from 195 in 2015. A survey by Britain’s Which? Travel found that one in ten passengers had experienced a flight “blighted by shouting, drunkenness, verbal abuse or other obnoxious behavior”. Irish-based low-cost airline Ryanair was apparently the incident leader, with 17% of Ryanair passengers saying they had experienced disruptive behavior in the past year.

Recent Ryanair incidents include a flight featuring a fight between two drunks over a woman’s not wearing shoes to the lavatory, another from Glasgow to Malaga with a drunk man bothering an on-board “hen party” resulting in a chaotic fist fight and two unruly men dressed as Tinkerbell and Bob the Builder being thrown off a flight from London Stansted to Krakow, Poland. But even this had its element of menace, as Tinkerbell “threatened to cut everyone up” before he was removed.

“Nobody wants to be on a flight with a couple of drunks on board creating trouble,” said Michael O’Leary, RyanAir CEO. But he blamed the problem on the airports, with “stag and hen parties” (who Americans might call “bachelor” and “bachelorette” groups) drinking heavily before a flight and posing a “threat to safety.”

O’Leary told the Independent, “Drinking on planes is controlled. On our flights, averaging one hour 15 minutes, the most you’ll be served is one or two drinks. And if a passenger is being disruptive, he or she won’t be served with alcohol at all.” But “Our challenge is: we have passengers, particularly during flight delays, stuck in airport bars drinking six, eight, 10 pints.”

Ryanair asked that British airport bars should stop serving alcohol before 10am, and limit passengers to two drinks. As of last November, the British government was considering a similar proposal.

But what about the planes? Could a booze ban be imposed on certain flights, or could “alcohol-free” flights become a thing?

Don’t laugh; it happened to smoking, now little missed by most travelers. And that’s no April Fool.