The Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (VABC) is an executive branch agency under the Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security. It is responsible for wholesale and retail operations of spirits, enforcement of state liquor laws, and licensing.

Office of the Governor
Governor
Chief of Staff
Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Virginia ABC

WET and DRY COUNTIES
State law allows local jurisdictions to hold public referendums and/or approve local laws or regulations on alcohol sales.

All cities are wet.

Population 21 and over (Estimate) (2017) 6,299,254

NET PROFIT
VA distributes its net profit into two avenues:

- General Fund (61.0%)
- Appropriation Act Transfers (39.0%)

HISTORY
The Virginia ABC has existed since 1934, and the first four ABC stores opened in Richmond on May 15 of that year. In 1936, the General Assembly granted full police powers to the Department’s designated agents to enforce the laws against bootlegging and moonshining. Local and federal officials had originally been expected to perform the enforcement functions, but more help was needed. On January 15, 2018, Virginia ABC transitioned from an executive branch agency to an authority.

ENFORCEMENT
Virginia ABC employs nearly 100 special agents who oversee 19,842 total ABC licenses held by establishments that sell and serve alcohol in the commonwealth. Virginia ABC licenses permit the sale and/or service of beer and wine and/or mixed beverages.

Although ABC agents have full police power, the men and women in ABC’s Bureau of Law Enforcement focus on helping business comply with Virginia’s alcohol laws, rules and regulations. Virginia ABC special agents also conduct investigations involving underage sales, fake IDs and other alcohol-related crimes, narcotics trafficking, tobacco smuggling, money laundering, tax fraud, counterfeiting and more.

$180,818,377
FY2018 Net Profit
Since its organization in 1934, Virginia ABC has contributed more than $10.4 billion to the state in the form of profits and taxes.

Figures are from 2018
Spirits are only sold in state operated ABC stores. Spirits, mixers and a selection of Virginia wines are shipped statewide from the Central Warehouse in Richmond. Virginia ABC ships to its stores and licensee restaurants purchase from the store of their choosing. Virginia ABC operates on a bailment system, where the agency is not charged for the product until it is shipped out of the warehouse.

Beer and wine are handled through private distributors who generally deliver products to the retailers. Retail to retail or retail to restaurant is not allowed, as the seller would be acting as a wholesaler, which is not allowed.

**Sources:** 2016 Survey Database, State Alcohol Tax Rates (July 2016), Educational Awards Program Reports for 2014-2015, Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, The Beverage Information Group's 2015 Fact Book, Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS)

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**OUTLETS AND GROCERY STORES**

Virginia has control of spirits at wholesale and retail. It has over 375 state operated retail stores.

- Virginia does not have policies that regulate the density of off-premise outlets in a neighborhood/precinct/condensed area
- Jurisdiction does not allow the sale of spirits in convenience stores
- Servers must be 18 years old and older to serve beer at on-premise outlets, and employees at off-premise outlets have no minimum age specified to sell beer
- The sale of beer and wine are permitted in grocery stores
- Sunday sales are allowed
- Keg registration is required
- For every 100,000 residents ages 21 and older, there are 5.9 spirits outlets
- Beverage service training is voluntary in the state

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**DEFINITIONS**

- **Control systems** -- jurisdictions that directly control the distribution and sale of beverage alcohol in their borders.
- **Three-tier system** -- the method of alcohol distribution developed after Prohibition in the United States. Producers/manufacturers (first tier) can sell products only to wholesalers/distributors (second tier) who then sell to retailers (third tier).
- **Revenue Per Capita** -- revenue per person.
- **Wet and dry counties** -- Wet jurisdictions are those that permit the sale of spirits, wine, or beer for on-premise and off-premise consumption. Dry jurisdictions prohibit some or all alcohol sales, whether on- or off-premise.

**Sources:** 2016 Survey Database, State Alcohol Tax Rates (July 2016), Educational Awards Program Reports for 2014-2015, Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, The Beverage Information Group's 2015 Fact Book, Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS)