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## **ABL Annual Meeting Focuses on ‘Challenge of Change’ for Independent Beverage Licensees & Alcohol Industry**

**APRIL 3, 2019 - BETHESDA, MD** - Independent beverage licensees and their hospitality industry partners came together on March 24-26, 2019 for American Beverage Licensees’ (ABL) 17th Annual Meeting at Bally’s Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. During the meeting, attendees networked with their peers from across the country while also learning about emerging trends and ongoing issues affecting the beverage alcohol industry.

“For bar, tavern and liquor store owners, change is occurring in their industry faster than ever before. Social and business norms are being tested and beverage licensees will play a key role in determining what the future beverage alcohol marketplace looks like,” said ABL Executive Director John Bodnovich. “This year’s ABL Annual Meeting challenged attendees’ self-awareness by addressing provocative but relevant issues that beverage retailers are currently facing - or will face in the near future.”

The annual meeting featured two keynote addresses from longtime industry veterans who shared their wisdom and ideas from the beer and spirits industries, respectively.

Keith Villa, Brewmaster & Co-Founder of CERIA Brewing Company, shared his unique perspective on the beer industry, from discussing his vision as the creator of Blue Moon more than two decades ago, to starting his own brewing company that incorporates cannabis into products and the challenges and opportunities that come with being at the forefront of an emerging product marketplace.

Peter Angus, Executive Vice President of U.S. & Canadian Sales for Tito’s Handmade Vodka, discussed the rapid rise - and exceptional success - of Tito’s over the past decade, and how culture, quality and commitment have made their product the number one on- and off-premise distilled spirits brand in the United States. Peter also emphasized the vital role that independent retailers continue to play in the success of not just Tito’s but the industry as whole.

With a Supreme Court case pending and state legislatures debating hundreds of bills that would affect the beverage alcohol industry, a handful of industry attorneys were on hand to breakdown the legal issues of the day and alcohol regulatory trends in the states.

Scott Keller, Partner with the law firm Baker Botts, LLP and Michael Madigan, Managing Shareholder of law firm Madigan, Dahl & Harlan, P.A., provided attendees with an overview of legal cases currently in the courts that have the potential to upend the traditional Three-Tier System of beverage alcohol in the United States, including the current U.S. Supreme Court case of *Tennessee Wine & Spirits Retailers Association v. Blair*.

A panel discussion on key issues facing state alcohol regulators, including the challenges they face in the ever-scrutinized world of licensing and enforcement, featured Jake Hegeman, Vice President - Legal & Regulatory Affairs for the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America; Matthew Botting, General Counsel for California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control; and Neal Insley, Senior Vice President & General Counsel for the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association.

Meeting speakers also addressed a variety of important trends in beverage alcohol media; mobile sales platforms and data; sports gaming; impaired driving policy; and sexual harassment in the hospitality workplace.

ABL Executive Director John Bodnovich led a Q&A Session with Harry Schumacher, Owner & Publisher of *Beer Business Daily*, who answered a range of questions on topics including diversity in the industry (with a focus on women leaders); craft momentum; wholesaler consolidation; and what media outlets we should trust for our industry news.

Roi Kliper, CEO of City Hive, Inc., a provider of branded digital solutions to thousands of independent retailers around the country, discussed what retailers should be paying attention to when it comes to fully utilizing their customer data, and how to build for success in this new and challenging business environment.

Becky Harris, immediate past-chair of the Nevada Gaming Control Board and current academic fellow at the UNLV International Center for Gaming Regulation, shared her views on the current state of sports betting following the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down its federal ban - and what it could mean for beverage licensees looking to establish or expand lottery and gambling offerings in retail establishments.

Ann Kitch, Transportation Research Analyst at the National Conference of State Legislatures, shared her insights into the policy world of impaired driving, how she identifies and monitors state legislation on traffic safety issues and the rise of drug-impaired driving as it relates to legislation in state capitols across the country.

Heather Stone, Legal Counsel at the national law firm Dinsmore & Shohl, LLP, shared her expertise and insights into helping employers lower the frequency and severity of employment practice claims - focusing on what those in the hospitality industry should be paying attention to in the #MeToo era.

The 2019 ABL Annual Meeting also provided an opportunity for ABL to recognize those who make a difference in the industry. Seventeen retail beverage businesses from across the country were recognized as 2019 Brown-Forman Retailers of the

Year at the ABL Honors Gala on March 26, 2019. In attendance to present the awards was Michael Rasp, Brown-Forman's Nevada State Manager.

Craig Purser, President & CEO of the National Beer Wholesalers Association was also recognized at the ABL Honors Gala as the 2019 ABL Top Shelf Award honoree. The ABL Top Shelf Award recognizes those who have demonstrated excellence over their careers in the beverage alcohol industry and represents the highest recognition given by America's independent beer, wine and spirits retailers.

The ABL Board of Directors elected four beverage licensees to the ABL Executive Committee during the Annual Meeting. These individuals, each serving two-year terms, will join current ABL officers in leading the association towards meeting its strategic goals and initiatives. The new officers include:

President: John "J.J." Moran, Jr. | Four Winds Liquor & Lounge | Cheyenne, WY  
Vice President Off-Premise: Bobby Greenawalt | B&B Bartending | Auburn, AL  
Vice President On-Premise: Chris Marsicano | The Village Supper Club | Delavan, WI  
At-Large: Warren Scheidt | Cork Liquors | Columbus, IN

ABL thanks the following 2019 ABL Annual Meeting hosts and exhibitors: 3x3 Insights, LLC; American Distilled Spirits Association; Bacardi USA, Inc.; Beam Suntory; Brown-Forman; Casa Dragones; E. & J. Gallo Winery; Heaven Hill Brands; Infinium Spirits; Luxco; MillerCoors; National Association of Beverage Importers; Pernod Ricard USA; Proximo Spirits; Samson & Surrey; Sazerac; Serrallés USA; Tito's Handmade Vodka; and William Grant & Sons.

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*American Beverage Licensees is the preeminent national trade association for beverage alcohol retailers. Direct retail beverage alcohol sales in the United States generate more than a 2.03 million well-paying jobs. ABL's thousands of on-premise and off-premise licensee members are independent and often family-owned establishments. The beverage retailing industry pays over \$27.9 billion in federal taxes and \$20.0 billion in state and local taxes. To learn more about ABL, visit [www.ablusa.org](http://www.ablusa.org).*

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