



# WSWA

## Membership Handbook

**Benefits and Resources to Serve  
American Family-Owned Wine and  
Spirits Wholesalers**

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



**2025  
2026**



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# WSWA

## Membership Handbook





## Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America: Who We Are

Founded in 1943, Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) is the only national trade association representing the distribution tier of the beverage alcohol industry, dedicated to advancing our interests and independence.

WSWA has more than 400 member companies in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its members distribute more than 80% of all wine and spirits sold at wholesale in the United States. American family-owned wine and spirits distributors are the local marketing and logistic experts in every state and every congressional district.

WSWA advocates on federal, state, regulatory and legal issues impacting distributors and the beverage alcohol industry. The association focuses on important policy areas such as taxation of family-owned businesses, state-based alcohol regulation, social responsibility, defending the three-tier system, intoxicating hemp, cannabis regulation and impaired driving prevention.

WSWA also offers programs and events that advance member careers and help businesses thrive in a diverse and dynamic industry.

### As the core of America's three-tier alcohol system, America's family-owned wholesalers:

- Support 88,000+ American jobs.
- Generate \$80 billion in tax revenue.
- Generate \$7.5 billion in wages.

### The system creates a framework to:

- Provide liquidity to the entire alcohol industry by purchasing product from producers and selling to retailers on appropriate credit terms.
- Collect excise tax on the sale of alcoholic beverages to retailers and remit it to the state.
- Use the wholesaler's vast product knowledge and accumulated local sales data to educate retailers and restaurants.
- Increase transparency in the alcohol supply chain.
- Combine national logistics expertise with tailored local marketing.
- Act as the graphic design department for suppliers.

## WSWA Board of Governance

Our association represents the whole industry and all U.S. wholesalers, large and small, from across the country, and our governance reflects that.

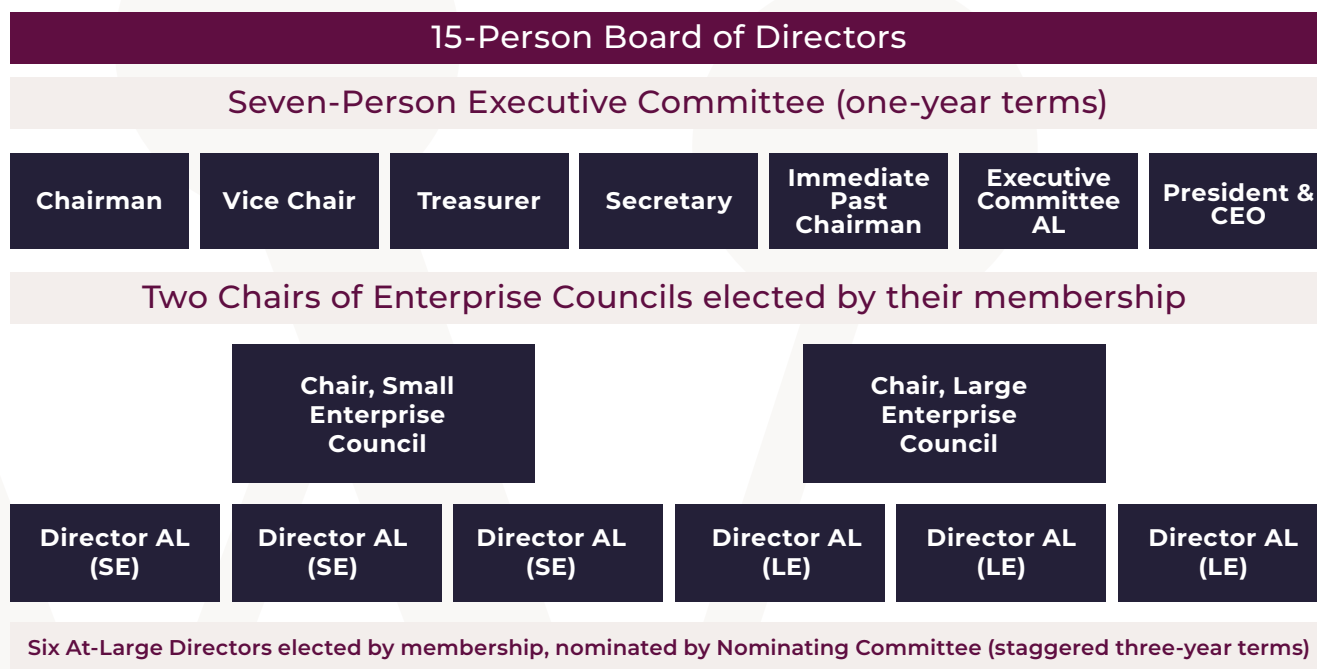
WSWA is governed by a 15-person Board of Directors and a seven-person Executive Committee. Each member the Board of Directors has a staggered three-year term to provide revolving participation.

The 15-person Board of Directors has equal representation from the Small Enterprise Council (four seats) and the Large Enterprise Council (four seats). The At-Large Directors are nominated by a committee and voted on by the membership each year at the fall membership meeting, the Forum.

What differentiates the Small Enterprise and Large Enterprise Councils? The Small Enterprise Council includes to any WSWA member with sales volume of \$300 Million or less. The Large Enterprise Council is includes members with sales more than \$300 million..

The WSWA Executive Committee consists of the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Immediate Past Chair, Executive Committee At-Large (for the highest dues paying member), and President & CEO.

### WSWA Governance Structure



## WSWA Bylaws

WSWA is governed by a set of bylaws, last amended in 2025, that establish the association's membership requirements, Board and Committee structure, and other key governance requirements. If you have questions about the operation of the bylaws, please contact WSWA General Counsel Jake Hegeman at [jake.hegeman@wswa.org](mailto:jake.hegeman@wswa.org).

## Leading the Fight to Defend the Three-Tier System

It is WSWA's main priority to **defend the three-tier system** against legislation that would begin to dismantle it. WSWA helps maintain the three-tier system by working with state wholesaler associations to educate legislators about the benefits of the system and why it is imperative the structure remains strong. Above all, the association is dedicated to **preventing the bright lines of the tiers from being blurred**.

Designed to prevent the abuses that led to Prohibition, the three-tier system was adopted by every state after Prohibition was repealed in 1933. The adoption of the **21st Amendment** gave each **state the right** to decide how alcohol is distributed within its borders, and WSWA supports maintaining this system to ensure our industry is **well-regulated and safe**.

### The system creates a framework for:

- Ensuring the orderly collection of taxes on beverage alcohol.
- Preventing the sale of counterfeit and dangerous products.
- Increasing variety and consumer access.
- Protecting oversight and accountability.



**State-Level Advocacy:** WSWA's State affairs team advocates against state legislation that would negatively impact the three-tier system. Each state has an assigned manager who serves as the interface between state associations and WSWA. State managers are ready to provide feedback and support, thereby ensuring state associations and WSWA members have the resources and knowledge they need to be successful advocates for the three-tier system.



**Federal-Level Advocacy:** WSWA's Federal Affairs Team focuses its efforts on ensuring strong three-tier language is included in the STOP Act every five years. Additionally, WSWA opposes the shipping of alcohol through the postal service, utilizes Project 21 grassroots campaigns, and supports education through the reinstated 21st Amendment Caucus with supplier and retailer partners.



**Educational Collateral:** WSWA develops and maintains a large library of educational materials, which are made available to members for advocacy efforts. One-pagers, leave-behinds and presentations are available for grassroots efforts, informing legislators and distribution at events.

## WSWA Is Fighting Direct-to-Consumer Shipping of Alcohol

WSWA works with state wholesaler associations and member companies in every state around the country to advocate in state capitols against the biggest threat to the industry and the three-tier system: direct-to-consumer (DTC) shipping of beverage alcohol products.

### WSWA Anti-DTC Advocacy Efforts

- WSWA's vast DTC advocacy resource library contains talking points, one-pagers and model language. Visit [www.wswa.org/DTC-know-the-whole-story](https://www.wswa.org/DTC-know-the-whole-story).
- WSWA's expanded State Affairs Team holds comprehensive DTC policy knowledge and helps support state advocacy with comment letters, branded educational documents and testimony advocating against state and federal legislation.
- WSWA's grassroots initiative, Project 21, activates members' employees so that legislators hear from their constituents about the negative impact of DTC legislation.
- WSWA advocates for local, licensed delivery as the responsible alcohol delivery solution.




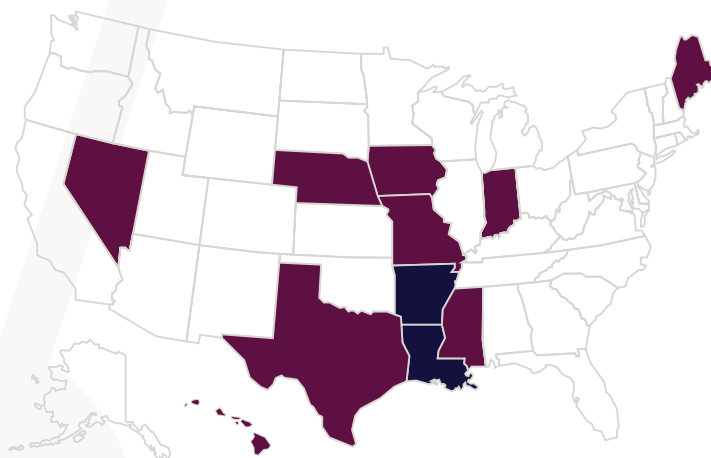
Visit  
[www.wswa.org/DTC-know-the-whole-story](https://www.wswa.org/DTC-know-the-whole-story)

### Did you know?

- WSWA's State Advisory Council, made up of state wholesaler associations, member government affairs employees and member lobbyists, meets once a month to discuss and share strategies to defend against direct-to-consumer shipping legislation.

**IN 2025,  
ZERO STATE LEGISLATURES  
CHOSE TO ENACT SPIRITS  
LEGISLATION.**

-  ENACTED WINE DTC BILLS
-  DEFEATED SPIRITS DTC BILLS



## WSWA Is Fighting Against Allowing Alcohol to Be Shipped Through the Post Office

There is an effort in Congress to repeal long-standing federal policy that prohibits the United States Postal Service (USPS) from shipping alcohol. If successful, such a measure would undermine nearly 90 years of successful state-based alcohol regulation. It would also compromise the public health and safety priorities the current law protects.

WSWA members are **committed to protecting and distributing beverage alcohol products safely and effectively** — sustaining a dynamic, growing marketplace and contributing to the economy.

It is critical for members of Congress to keep in mind that the current U.S. system of alcohol regulation exists to **defend the public** and the beverage alcohol marketplace.

### These important safeguards include the following:

- **Protecting consumers** from the introduction of **unsafe, counterfeit and unlicensed alcohol** into the American marketplace.
- Ensuring that the production, distribution and sale of alcohol is limited to those with a **proper license and regulatory oversight**.
- Ensuring alcohol is **only purchased** and/or received by consumers who are **21 years of age or older** and deliveries are made in **accordance with state and local laws**.
- Carrying out the effective and reliable collection of state and local sales and **alcohol excise taxes**.

Since every state has a distinct and unique alcohol regulatory framework, allowing the USPS to ship alcohol would also tremendously **diminish the primary authority** of states and local governments to regulate alcohol within their borders. In addition, legalizing such alcohol shipments would **inhibit the collection of millions of dollars** in critical excise and sales tax revenue, while **undercutting local wholesalers and retailers**.



## WSWA Advocates for Fair Taxes for Family-Owned Wholesalers

WSWA is committed to championing fair taxation for family-owned businesses. Our legislative mission is to foster growth and reinvestment among wholesalers, ensuring they enjoy equitable taxation in the wine and spirits industry. WSWA conducted numerous warehouse tours, held roundtables, and attended congressional hearings and events at the White House to share your stories of reinvestments made within your facilities and communities. We are proud to announce that our tireless efforts culminated in the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), securing tax fairness and stability for our sector. Together, we are paving the way for a more prosperous future for all wholesalers.

### Important Provisions for WSWA in OBBBA

- **Section 199A:** Also known as the 20% deduction on qualified business income, this provision is critically important to keeping wholesalers competitive. Section 199A has helped WSWA members reinvest over \$380 million into their companies, employees, and communities since 2017. This deduction has been made permanent through the passage of the OBBBA.
- **Last in, first out (LIFO) accounting:** LIFO is a more than 80-year-old inventory accounting system which is used by nearly every WSWA member company. WSWA successfully advocated keeping this important accounting tool in our toolbox.
- **Estate taxes:** WSWA advocated to keep the current exemptions in the tax code, which help family-owned wine and spirits wholesalers remain healthy as operations move from one generation to the next. The OBBBA eliminated the scheduled sunset of the increased estate and gift tax exemption under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA). Instead of reverting to lower levels, the law permanently increases the exemption.

Learn more at [www.wswa.org/data-and-impact/economic-database](http://www.wswa.org/data-and-impact/economic-database)



## New and Emerging Markets: Cannabis and Hemp

In 2022, WSWA issued its policy position pertaining to recreational cannabis, advocating for a robust regulatory framework at both the federal and state levels. In 2024, WSWA began, due to increased membership questions and attention, WSWA began to devote resources to understanding the federal and state regulatory landscape governing the emerging marketplace for intoxicating hemp beverages.

The passage of the 2018 Farm Bill allowed for the production of hemp in the U.S. and removed hemp as a controlled substance.

### WSWA Objectives and Priorities Include:

- Identifying emerging issues related to cannabis legalization, licensure, regulation and control.
- Advocating for the federal regulation of intoxicating products that use industrial hemp.
- Educating stakeholders on the current cannabis and hemp landscape at the federal and state levels , with an eye toward how to best advocate for WSWA member objectives.
- Determining potential outcomes, in both the near term and the long range, and how the WSWA membership could be affected.
- Developing sound strategies for engagement and advocacy.



## New and Emerging Markets: Cannabis and Hemp

### Principles for Federal Cannabis Regulation

WSWA believes the time has come for Congress to comprehensively legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis at the federal level.

WSWA has developed policy principles for the federal regulation of cannabis based on the federal laws and regulations that govern alcohol.

Core to these principles is the belief that all businesses engaged in the production and interstate transport of cannabis should be federally regulated. All cannabis products should be tested and taxed, and states should have the authority to enact stronger measures within their borders.

### Principles for Federal Regulation of Intoxicating Hemp Products

WSWA believes Congress should add regulations to allow for a more comprehensive framework that authorizes the states to ban or legalize and regulate intoxicating hemp products to the extent each state deems appropriate. This principle models the federal status imposed on alcohol through the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment.

WSWA has developed a public position for the federal and state regulation of intoxicating hemp products that reads:

"Intoxicating hemp products should be regulated at the state and federal level. Federal law should afford states the authority to determine whether to allow for their retail sale, and, if a state chooses allow such sales, the type of regulatory framework imposed. Such a framework should draw on the principles of alcohol regulation which prioritize a safe and reliable marketplace by supporting public safeguards and consumer choice. This system has been an unparalleled success and can serve as a model for the regulation of intoxicating hemp products, including beverages."

**The transition from Prohibition to legal status for alcohol has been an American success story.**



# Combating Impaired Driving and Underage Alcohol Access

As a socially sensitive product category, beverage alcohol and the industry that supplies and sells it must be managed with special care. WSWA remains steadfast in its **commitment** to fighting **impaired driving and underage access to alcohol** in all forms.

## Impaired Driving

WSWA advocates for a comprehensive legislative strategy to prevent impaired driving. The association has **endorsed numerous bills in Congress** to combat both alcohol and multi-substance impaired driving and ensure effective tools and resources are available to continue research, prevention and enforcement. Some of our successes include:

- **The Drug-Impaired Driving Education Act** establishes an annual \$5 million federal grant program for states to educate the public on the dangers of drug-impaired driving.
- **The Prevent Impaired Driving Child Endangerment Act** withholds highway funding from states that don't adopt specific laws (like New York state's Leandra's Law) to make it a felony to drive drunk or impaired with a passenger under the age of 16.
- **The Multiple Substance Impaired Driving Prevention Act** allows funds to be used for drug toxicology, impaired driving-related training for law enforcement, and general offender monitoring technology.

## Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act

Since 2006, the STOP Act has been effective in reducing underage drinking in America. It has promoted improved public health monitoring and surveillance of underage drinking while supporting community actions to prevent contributing factors. The STOP Act has made significant strides in addressing this issue.

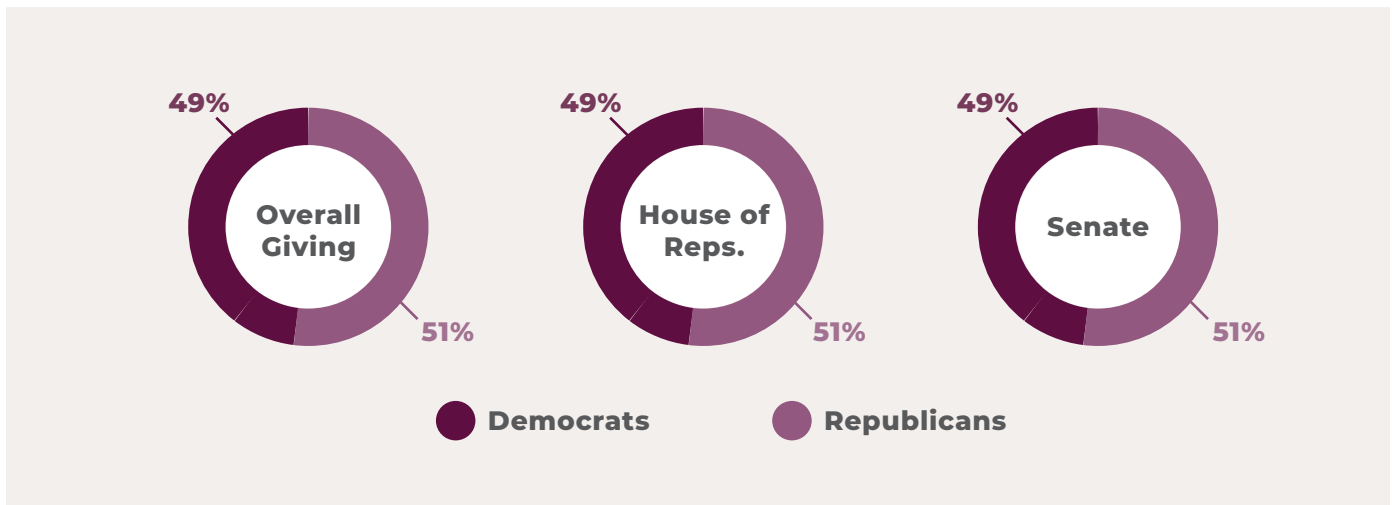
WSWA will continue to advocate for the reauthorization of the STOP Act, which was last renewed by Congress in 2022 and will remain in effect until September 2027. We are committed to ensuring its continued reauthorization.



## WSWA-PAC

WSWA's political arm, WSWA-PAC is the only political action committee representing the voice of wine and spirits wholesaler employees across the country. WSWA-PAC **supports pro-wholesaler candidates** at the national level. The PAC is a bipartisan organization dedicated to elect candidates who **support the three-tier system**, regardless of their political party.

WSWA-PAC has approximately 1,600 wholesaler employees from 40 member companies contributing each year, giving a total of **\$2 million a cycle** to fund the campaigns of those who promote and protect our industry.



This election cycle, WSWA-PAC will support over **300 candidates** for the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate and state association PACs. WSWA-PAC hosts **multiple fundraisers** throughout the year to advance the wholesaler brand. During these events, wholesaler employees in D.C. provide a unique experience by preparing **specialty wine and spirits tastings** for the political candidates and encouraging WSWA members in attendance to connect with those running for office.



## WSWA's Project Twenty-One

Project Twenty-One is a grassroots network enabling professionals at all levels of the American beverage alcohol industry to amplify their voices for political advocacy. The platform allows individuals to write, text or tweet their elected representatives in real time, encouraging them to support or oppose legislation that impacts the industry.

Since its inception, Project Twenty-One has attracted **17,159 advocates** and generated over **263,017 letters** to over **57 campaigns** in **12 states**, **one metropolitan city** and **five federal campaigns**.

This force multiplier builds momentum when activating the association's efforts to bring about positive change in regards to beverage alcohol laws and regulations.

Project Twenty-One has launched campaigns on the federal and state level combatting or supporting legislative initiatives that affect the wholesale tier in conjunction with our retail partners. This, along with our lobbying efforts and advocacy, is one of the many tools the association can utilize to benefit its membership, empowering WSWA member company employees to make their voices heard.

"The Maine Beer & Wine Distributors Association (MBWD) had a direct-to-consumer (DTC) legislative fight and partnered with WSWA to mobilize Project Twenty-One as an effective tool to communicate quickly," said Cheryl Timberlake, President of Capitol Insights and advocate for MBWD. "This was a great resource to garner opposition to legislation."

One method WSWA uses to spread awareness about Project Twenty-One is providing posters in member companies' warehouses, breakrooms and sales offices. We also encourage more participation through mobile phones by way of QR codes, which allows field reps



The image displays a promotional poster for Project Twenty-One, an Alcohol Industry Alliance. The poster features a man in a white shirt working with bottles in a warehouse setting. Below the image, the text reads: "PROJECT twentyone AN ALCOHOL INDUSTRY ALLIANCE". To the right, a QR code is labeled "JOIN TODAY!". Below the QR code, the text states: "IN 8 SECONDS OR LESS, TELL YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE TO VOTE NO TO DTC SPIRITS SHIPPING IN MAINE!".

Below the poster is a digital form titled "Send an email to your official with one click!". The form includes fields for "Title", "Your full name", "Street address", "Zip code", "Phone number", and "Email address". A "Send Email" button is located below these fields. Below the button, the text reads: "Subject: OPPOSE ALCOHOL SHIPPING THROUGH USPS".

On the left side of the form, there is a section titled "TAKE ACTION: OPPOSE ALCOHOL SHIPPING THROUGH USPS". This section contains text about Congressman Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) and the United States Postal Service Shipping Equity Act. It explains that the legislation would allow the USPS to ship alcohol, which would undermine nearly 80 years of successful state-based alcohol regulation. It also states that this legislation would allow the USPS to ship alcohol, regardless of the ability to circumvent distributors and retailers through direct shipment to consumers from producers and retailers. This would undermine the state-based regulated three-tier system for alcohol and compromise public health and safety provisions that benefit consumers.

At the bottom of the form, there is a section titled "Enter your message". It contains a text area for the user to write a message and a "Send" button.

## Warehouse Tour Program – Bringing Elected Officials to You

WSWA facilitates warehouse tours for local, state and federal elected officials to visit their wine and spirits wholesalers. We work with distributors to:

- Coordinate elected officials visiting your facility and meeting your employees.
- Demonstrate the value of wholesalers to their states and local communities.
- Showcase the role of wholesalers as the central hub of the three-tier system.

The more elected officials know about wholesalers, the more likely they are to support wholesalers and the three-tier system. Also, pro-industry advocacy is much more effective when it leverages relationships that have already been formed during a warehouse tour.

Email [warehousetours@swa.org](mailto:warehousetours@swa.org) to learn more and schedule a tour of your warehouse.



## WSWA's Federal Regulatory Advocacy

WSWA's Legal and Regulatory Team **tracks federal regulatory actions** impacting the wholesale tier.

- **Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB):** The team closely monitors TTB activities and **comments on proposed rulemaking**. Members of the group have **expert knowledge** on the **Federal Alcohol Administration Act (FAA Act)** and how regulations impact the wholesale tier.

- o Changes to standards of fill
- o Labeling requirements
- o Trade practice requirements including potential changes from the 2021 White House Executive Order on Competition
- o Guidance updates

- **Other Federal Agencies:** The team also monitors and comments on issues originating in other agencies on issues like:

- o Commercial trucking regulations
- o Overtime eligibility
- o Hemp and cannabis regulation

- **Executive Branch Initiatives:** The team also follows and comments on actions like the 2021 Executive Order on Competition and how cannabis should be federally regulated.



## WSWA State Advocacy

WSWA works on behalf of members to educate lawmakers on the value of wholesalers, preserving the three-tier system by defending against legislation that would dismantle it. Topics of particular interest for state advocacy include:

- **Direct-to-consumer shipping**
- **Satellite locations**
- **On-site sales**
- **Self-distribution**
- **Intoxicating hemp beverages**

WSWA works with **state wholesaler associations and member government affairs representatives** to **develop advocacy strategies, draft comment letters, craft talking points, and testify before of committees** in states across the nation.

The three-person state team works diligently to advocate for legislation that maintains the three-tier system while advancing consumers' desire for the simplicity and convenience of e-commerce. Topics that have come up again and again in this arena include **local, licensed delivery and to-go sales**.

WSWA participates in many **national advocacy groups** to develop relationships with legislators from across the country and educate them on the importance of maintaining the three-tier system. While we have the attention of state legislators, the association also makes it a point to educate them on the value wholesalers bring to local communities.



## Legal Research, Analysis and Guidance

### Did you know?

WSWA's Legal and Regulatory Team is a one-stop source for insights and analysis into:

- **State laws and regulations:** The team has broad and deep knowledge of the mechanics of laws and regulations regulating suppliers, wholesalers and retailers. The team maintains a **national database** of this information and routinely prepares **surveys** and **analyses on these laws** for members to support legal and legislative advocacy efforts.
- **State legislative drafting guidance:** As new issues arise — such as local, licensed delivery by on- and off-premise retailers — the team **develops guidance** on how members and state associations can best approach new legislation.
- **Emerging issues:** The team routinely **analyzes new issues** in the beverage alcohol sector to identify opportunities for industry success in areas such as e-commerce, product innovations and new routes to market.
- **Strategy, recommendations and potential roadblocks:** The team routinely counsels members and state associations on legislative changes and emerging regulatory issues.



## WSWA Federal and State Litigation Monitoring

WSWA **monitors litigation** at the **federal and state** levels that could affect wholesalers, states' right to regulate alcohol, and the three-tier system. Some cases are potentially influential enough that WSWA will **file or join amicus briefs** and counsel states and state associations on our perspectives of the law. Issues we follow generally involve alcohol and the 21st Amendment, the dormant commerce clause, antitrust legislation and the preemption of federal law, among others.

Currently, we are **actively tracking** and advocating our positions in retailer interstate shipping litigation. In a number of states, in-state retailers are allowed to deliver and/or ship wine to consumers, but out-of-state retailers are prohibited from doing the same. WSWA **argues** that **out-of-state wine retailers** are pushing for a large exception: They **seek to bypass the three-tier system** that in-state wine retailers must go through.

Each month, we schedule a call with the various member stakeholders that are fighting this and other issues in their state, and we help by **reviewing briefs finding experts, writing amicus briefs, and counseling** on the legal and policy issues.



## Legislative Trends and Analysis Across the Country

Using legislative aggregation, tracking and reporting tools, WSWA can provide **detailed analysis of trends** across the country for a number of priorities. These trends can provide members with **a clear look at the current industry focus** as well as a peek at where the industry may be headed.

In this past year alone, WSWA tracked legislation ranging from **direct-to-consumer (DTC) shipping, intoxicating hemp (to-go and delivery), ready-to-drink (RTD) beverages, expanded privileges for alcohol manufacturers, licensing limits, privatization** and more.

Tracking trends in any given year can allow members to **accurately plan for the future**. Through sophisticated monitoring tools, our members can be confident of upcoming threats and opportunities.

### In 2024:

- WSWA tracked 794 alcohol bills in statehouses across the United States.
- 141 alcohol bills were enacted, with the top states for enactment being California (15 bills), Maryland (13 bills), Maine (11 bills) and New York (11 bills).
- Deployed six grassroots campaigns across the country to advocate positions on relevant bills, resulting in 157,120 industry letters sent to legislators.



## Coalitions and Industry Partnerships

Did you know WSWA is a sought-after partner in many efforts to lobby Congress, state legislatures and local government? Our partners understand the influence of WSWA and our membership and are eager to work with us to effect change. We collaborate with beverage alcohol industry partners, family-owned businesses, the wholesale industry at large and many more organizations to amplify our message to elected officials and policymakers.

**Here is just a sampling of some of the industry allies and issues we work with:**



- #HelpHospitality
- Dietary guidelines on alcohol consumption
- Changes to overtime rules
- Family Business Estate Tax Coalition
- Commercial truck driving
- Fight against USPS shipping of alcohol
- Critical Infrastructure Supply Chain Council



# \*Access LIVE

## What is it?

WSWA Access LIVE was formerly known as the WSWA Annual Convention & Exposition. While this event has been around for 80 years, in 2023 WSWA launched the reimagined event to create a more engaging show to meet the business needs of all three tiers of the American alcohol industry. Access LIVE now brings together the entire industry, under one roof, to collectively connect, innovate, grow, and address key industry challenges. There is no other event in the industry that rallies so much expertise, networking, solutions and opportunities under one roof!

## When is it?

- **2026 Access LIVE: February 2 – 5, 2026, Caesars Forum, Las Vegas**
- **2027 Access LIVE: February 1 – 4, 2027, Gaylord Texan Resort, Dallas**
- **2028 Access LIVE: February 28 – March 3, 2028, Orlando, Florida**
- **2029 Access LIVE: February 5 - 8, 2029, Las Vegas, NV**

## Who attends?

All three tiers of the industry are invited and encouraged to attend! This includes:

- Wine and spirits wholesalers
- Suppliers (alcohol and non-alcohol brands, producers, importers, etc.)
- Industry technology, service providers, logistics companies, banking/finance groups and more!
- On-premise and off-premise wine and spirits retailers
- Industry media, podcasts, and influencers

## Do you want to help shape future Access LIVE events?

Join the Access LIVE task force today to help develop and influence the future of this industry-wide event! The Access LIVE Task Force, which meets virtually once a month, helps ensure the event suits the needs of a variety of stakeholders. Members also serve as ambassadors for the event and help promote Access LIVE across the country.

Contact WSWA's Senior Vice President of Meetings & Events, Kari Langerman ([kari.langerman@wswa.org](mailto:kari.langerman@wswa.org)) for more information and to join the task force.



For more information, visit [accesslive.wswa.org](https://accesslive.wswa.org)

## Brand Battle

### What is it?

Brand Battle is a *Shark Tank*-style pitch competition in which new and emerging brands present their products to a panel of distributors to see if they have what it takes to make it in today's U.S. marketplace. Launched at WSWA Access LIVE, Brand Battle is a high-energy, exciting series of virtual competitions culminating in the popular, crowd-pleasing live event that put category winners on center stage at Access LIVE to pitch their brands and receive valuable insight from leaders of the industry.

### Tournament categories include:

- **Vodka/Gin**
- **Whiskey/Whisky/Bourbon/Scotch**
- **Modifiers (Liqueurs/Mixers/Cordials)**
- **RTDs/Hard Seltzers**
- **Rum**
- **Low-Alcohol/No-Alcohol**
- **Tequila/Mezcal/Cachaça**
- **Wine**

### Wholesaler Member Engagement is Needed!

Brand Battle is the opportunity to highlight wholesaler member knowledge and expertise in helping discover, grow and create brands. Members are needed to help review entries, select contenders and judge brands throughout the tournament.

Brands are judged on the following:

- Uniqueness of story and product
- Compelling packaging
- Possibility of success in the marketplace
- Any standout features



# WSWA's Annual Membership Forum

## What is it?

WSWA's Annual Membership Forum, typically held in mid-September, is for WSWA's Board of Directors, Council Chairs and Vice Chairs, company executives, owners and executives, next-generation and rising leaders. The event is held annually, typically in mid-September.

It is critically important for WSWA wholesaler members to participate in this two-day event where industry issues are discussed and decisions are made! The Forum brings together WSWA members nationwide for an opportunity to:

- **Gain a deeper understanding of WSWA's comprehensive advocacy efforts.**
- **Attend discussions on industry hot topics.**
- **Engage with industry peers during committee, council and task force meetings.**
- **Learn what WSWA has in store for the coming year!**
- **Election of new Board of Directors**

WSWA values the wholesaler member's thoughts, opinions and expertise and the staff want to hear from you. This meeting is the one event each year where the association can connect with wholesaler members without the influence of other industry tiers being in the same space. As a wholesaler member, be sure to attend this meeting each year to help ensure the success of the wholesaler tier of the industry!



# Council for Leadership Development

## What is it?

The WSWA Council for Leadership Development (CLD) was developed over 60 years ago and brings together rising leaders in the wholesale tier. Over the past decades, this group and the associated conference have evolved but the focus of the Council remains the same: to provide a space for the future leaders to share ideas, learn about industry topics and trends, develop and improve leadership skills, and network with the alcohol industry's future leaders.

The CLD provides many opportunities for our alcohol industry's next generation of leaders and rising managers, including:

- Building an educational foundation of essential policy, legislative, regulatory, marketing and trend information future leaders need to advance in their careers.
- Making connections with wholesaler, supplier and service provider peers — as well as current industry leaders, speakers, panelists and the WSWA staff/leadership team.
- Enhancing leadership skills and fine-tuning technology expertise and management abilities.

## When is it?

The CLD Conference is held annually in mid-July, rotating among cities around the U.S.

## Who should attend?

Any rising leader within a member wholesaler company.



# NextGen Leaders Summit

## What is it?

The NextGen Leaders Summit is designed to help **develop the next generation** of **family owners** and **non-family executive leadership** within WSWA member companies. Whether that generation is currently running the company or is a rising leader, this meeting is the place to gather, discuss unique business challenges, network with peers and gain industry insights.

## Key insights from the NextGen Leaders Summit

- Attendees are comprised of both family and non-family employees involved with the succession plan at their companies.
- The summit focuses on a select group of attendees, enabling opportunities for in-depth industry discussions on family business issues.
- Educational sessions and speakers focus on providing interactive content with more strategic leadership questions and goals.
- Participants engage with their peers at like-minded businesses in the wholesale tier.

The NextGen Leaders Summit began in 2021 as a spinoff of the Council for Leadership Development (CLD) Conference, taking CLD back to its roots. This is a more intimate event where those in their companies succession plans can hold strategic discussions and network with their peers.

## When is it?

Currently, the NextGen Leaders' Summit **takes place in July**, the same week as the CLD Conference. Throughout the year, there will be various opportunities for next-generation leaders to gather at other WSWA events.



## Women's Leadership Council

WSWA's Women's Leadership Council (WLC) was created to provide opportunities for women leaders to network and develop skills. WLC's mission is to **educate, elevate and empower** members, as well as industry leaders with the three-tier system, advancing women and providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and knowledge with peers.

The WLC is governed by a voluntary advisory of 10 elected women leaders.

### WLC Initiatives

The WLC achieves its goals by providing development and networking opportunities through the council's initiatives:

- **WLC's membership network** is complimentary for any wholesaler employee who wants to connect with peers and network in a meaningful way. The WLC hosts **quarterly membership calls** on topics that impact the daily work environment of women in wholesale.
- **WLC Mentorship Program** is a **six-month program** for women in wholesale looking to evolve as leaders, develop personal goals and learn from other distributor women.
- **WLC Leadership Development Conference** provides professional skill development and networking through webinars and our **annual in-person conference** in Washington, D.C. Want to start a women's group at your company? We can help. Want to develop your business acumen, increase your knowledge of industry trends, acquire advanced finance skills, build your brand, be a servant leader? Our conference has covered these topics and more.
- **WLC philanthropy** is at the core of this group. The WLC has found a way to **give back** to the community and support causes that make an impact each year.



## Winter State Policy Conference

WSWA's Winter State Policy Conference (WSPC) is an annual, multi-day gathering of state wholesaler associations and lobbyists to come together to discuss the political, legislative and legal issues facing America's family-owned wholesalers. WSWA wholesaler members, state association leaders, government affairs consultants and regulatory staff are all encouraged to attend.

WSPC participants meet to enjoy a wide range of programming including panels on emerging issues, educational sessions, open forum discussions as well as dinner, cocktail hours and camaraderie with industry peers.

### Who attends:

WSWA wholesaler members, state association leadership, government affairs consultants and regulatory staff are encouraged to attend.

### Comprehensive educational sessions cover topics such as:

- **Resource Development:** learn about **best practices** for creating talking points, leave-behinds, pre-drafted testimony.
- **Communications:** debate key **priority issues** to better your team's advocacy efforts on the ground.
- **Data:** gain a better understanding of **consumer concerns** and how to **use data** in advocacy efforts.
- **Industry Partnership:** discuss common issues with parallel industry representatives.
- **Emerging Issues:** share knowledge and receive real-time feedback from industry peers.



## Legislative Fly-In

More than half of Congress has served less than five years. That, combined with the closure of Congressional offices during the pandemic, means that many members of Congress don't have a strong knowledge of the importance of wholesalers.

WSWA's Legislative Fly-In provides membership the chance to meet face-to-face with their members of Congress to discuss issues impacting American family-owned wine and spirits wholesalers. This event kicks off with an evening welcome reception and dinner, followed by a full day of meetings on Capitol Hill. The event concludes with WSWA's annual Toast to Congress event.

The Fly-In is attended by any wholesaler member who wishes to be a part of the conversation, typically executive level members and those involved in their company's government affairs department and lobbying efforts.

## Toast to Congress: WSWA's Signature Event on Capitol Hill

WSWA hosts an **annual event to advance advocacy** on Capitol Hill. At Toast to Congress, WSWA member companies have the opportunity to visit with their members of Congress, both in the House and Senate. This allows for meaningful conversations with representatives and wholesalers on the priorities of the wholesale tier and the roles companies play in local communities.



## Legislative Advocacy:

### 21st Amendment Caucus

In 2023, WSWA, along with American Beverage Licensees (ABL), American Distilled Spirits Alliance (ADSA) and National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA) celebrated the creation of the Congressional 21st Amendment Caucus.

Chaired by Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-OK 5th District) and Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV 3rd District), the caucus will focus on the importance of maintaining effective, state-based alcohol regulation for American consumers and the marketplace. The caucus will educate members of Congress and their staff on the importance these regulations as well as the role of licensed alcohol businesses in collecting taxes, supporting public health priorities, and creating and maintaining a competitive, safe and efficient market. At a time when special interests are seeking to change or weaken these regulations, the caucus will work to protect the successful alcohol regulatory system that has well served the American public for decades.



## WSWA's SipSource

SipSource is the only source for aggregated distributor depletion data, built from unique items sold to individual stores. Since wholesalers distribute to all types of retailers, SipSource has unrivaled channel segmentation. It also covers the largest volume of bona fide alcohol sales and does not need to rely on estimates, samples or projections.

SipSource uses an industry-leading platform, VIP's iDIG, to deliver timely, transparent and trusted data. In addition to the reporting tool, subscribers have access to quarterly and annual reports that leverage powerful collaboration with industry leaders and provide high-level insights into the wine and spirits marketplace.

WSWA member companies who contribute their depletion data to SipSource receive a complimentary subscription to the report for their entire enterprise, including staff training on how to access and apply the data.

Interested in contributing data to SipSource and receiving the report?

Please contact Eric Schmidt mail to [eric.schmidt@wswa.org](mailto:eric.schmidt@wswa.org) for more information.



## WSWA Wholesaler Purchasing Program — Vendor Discounts

WSWA has partnered with **Distributors Solutions** to offer a portfolio of trusted industry-specific preferred suppliers of products and services to WSWA wholesaler members at **significant discounts**.

### Yearly Metrics:

Number of member companies participating:

**85**

Annual Spend:

**\$1,659,827**

Estimated total annual savings:

**\$204,313**

#### Employee Savings Programs

- Company-owned cellular services
- Rental cars

#### Insurance

- Health benefits
- Liability insurance
- Telehealth/virtual care

#### IT

- Handheld computers, printers and scanners

#### Miscellaneous

- Draught supplies
- Energy efficiency

#### Office

- Copier purchase/leasing
- Energy management
- Office supplies
- Small package shipping
- Break room supplies
- Office furniture

#### Personnel

- Payroll and HR services
- Employee screening services
- Training and safety management
- Uniforms
- Fire protection

#### Point of Sale

- Glides

#### Recycling

- Cardboard recycling
- Stretch film recycling

#### Print Shop

- Print shop supplies and equipment

#### Transportation

- Auto parts and supplies
- Driver risk management
- Fleet vehicles
- Fuel hedging
- Lift gates
- Tires
- Truck bodies and truck purchasing
- Diesel exhaust fluid (DEF)
- Fuel, diesel and unleaded

#### Warehouse

- Floor sweepers
- Forklifts, pallet jacks, batteries and chargers
- Industrial and cooler doors
- Loading dock equipment and accessories
- Maintenance, repair, and operations supplies
- Stretch film, wrap machines
- Recycling
- Industrial fans



# WSWA Educational Foundation College Scholarship Program

The WSWA Educational Foundation is governed by a voluntary board of WSWA wholesale members.

## • WSWA Educational Foundation College Scholarship Program

- o Exclusively for the children of WSWA member-company employees pursuing an undergraduate degree (i.e., trade school, associates, or bachelor's degree).
- o Fifty \$2,000 scholarships are awarded each year, with a second-year award based on GPA criteria totaling \$4,000.
- o Over 500 scholarships have been awarded since 2010, for a total value over \$1,000,000.

The application window for the scholarship runs from mid-March through the end of May each year. We encourage all members to promote this scholarships to their employees.



## Industry Economic Impact Data

WSWA works in collaboration with a **dedicated economic firm** to develop and maintain **macroeconomic** and **microeconomic** impact models in all 50 states and nationally. This partnership also allows WSWA to **create legislative economic reports** that illustrate the effects of a specific bill's passage.

### Economic Analysis and Deliverables

- **Value of wholesalers:** Our economic analyses evaluate the true value of wholesalers and the benefit they provide local communities, business owners, individuals and states.
- **Jobs created and income generated:** Focusing on local impact, our economic analyses illustrate the importance of wholesalers and the wine and spirits industry in generating jobs and income for employees in each state.
- **Tax revenue:** Tax revenues from the wine and spirits industry are compiled and examined for all 50 states, demonstrating the importance of this industry nationwide.
- **Public-facing reports:** Economic analysis and forecasts are packaged in clear, convincing and easy-to-follow one-pagers that highlight pertinent information and data.



Learn more at  
[www.wswa.org/data-and-impact/  
economic-database](http://www.wswa.org/data-and-impact/economic-database).

# WSWA's State Law Database

## What is it?

WSWA maintains a **national online database** that captures **state alcohol laws** and **regulations** important to wholesalers. This site contains **over 6,000 data points** and is searchable by a variety combination of states and issues.

The WSWA State Law Database is updated annually and available to all WSWA wholesaler members. WSWA's Legal and Regulatory Team also **reviews all enacted alcohol legislation** and makes over 100 updates to the WSWA State Law Database on an annual basis.

**NEW:** In 2025, WSWA is creating a comparable Hemp Law Database to capture the evolving statutes and regulations surrounding legal hemp and cannabis beverages.

## Example issues contained in the database:

- On- and off-premise curbside and delivery sales.
- Ready-to-drink (RTD) cocktails
- Consumer sampling
- Pricing
- Wholesale licenses and fees
- Point-of-sale advertising materials
- Coupons
- And much more





## FIND ALCOHOL LAWS AND REGULATIONS BY STATE

[Subscription and Pricing Information](#) | [Contact Us](#)



This database is provided as an informational aid and is not legal advice. Data may be out-of-date or incomplete. Please consult a lawyer before taking any action.

## Women in Leadership (WIL) Executive Education Program

*"I appreciate the insightful wisdom of Professor Galinsky, especially, how he taught the material. The engineer in me loved the research and data backing up the insights. The human in me loved the interactive breakout sessions that foster relationship building. The child in me loved the vividness of stories and imageries he used in the lessons. And the driver in me loved the connection he made between concepts and concrete actionable items and next steps."*  
— Glenny Tjahjadi, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits.

Each spring, WSWA hosts an **executive education program** for women leaders of wine and spirits wholesale member companies. This program is a **hybrid format**, with three weeks of classes being conducted virtually and the final capstone class held in person in Washington, D.C. At this culminating event, participants get a **certificate of completion** and a celebratory reception honoring the graduating class. Facilitators and guest speakers are recruited from the prestigious **Columbia University Business School**.

**How it started:** (WIL) began in 2019 when data from the **Women in the Workplace study** conducted by McKinsey and LeanIn.org pointed to the **lack of women leaders in wholesaler businesses**. Investment became a key factor in creating a program for high-potential wholesaler women leaders.

"This program has been truly inspirational," said Rachel Evans, National Account Manager for Wine & Spirits at Columbia Distributing. "The content shared, and relationships are invaluable, and I am emerging from this program stronger and more motivated to continue to grow and positively impact the wine and spirits Industry fueled by the support of this WIL group!"

To date, **177 women have participated** in this program, with a **95%** retention rate through investment in their growth, leadership and elevated talent. Most impressively, this program has an **80%** promotion rate among the graduates.



## Associate Members

WSWA has about of 130 partners through our associate membership ranging from craft brands to service providers to industry vendors — all connected to the wholesale tier.

Established partners and new partnerships provide great value and benefits such as solution-driven technology, more informed wholesale employees and a one-stop shop to all brands looking for distributor solutions in the marketplace. This growing category of membership is attributed to Access LIVE and additional benefits the association provides our partners.



Did you also know WSWA has a **dedicated webpage** highlighting all their associate members?

### What else do associate members provide?

Our associate members also bring to the table a wealth of **industry knowledge**, the latest beverage alcohol **trends, guidance** on brand development to increase sales, **unique services** to improve efficiency, **sponsorships** and **enhanced connections** between the tiers.

### Where can you meet with associate partners?

Most of our associate members participate in Access LIVE. They serve as exhibitors, sponsors of our meetings and thought leaders in the beverage alcohol space. Each associate member company is highlighted with signage to distinguish their membership level..





## WSWA Industry Awards

WSWA recognizes excellence in all three tiers of the industry with awards at Access LIVE. From industry icons to rising leaders who excel in their field to unique new brands and community service efforts, WSWA honors those standouts in the wine and spirits industry! Awards include:

### Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. Award

Ray Herrmann was not only a beverage alcohol industry titan, but also a man of great character, ethics and philanthropy — a true humanitarian. His namesake award is presented annually to a member of the wine and spirits industry who is a humanitarian, ethical, respectful and one-of-a-kind. The recipient of this award must actively display a character dedicated to integrity, philanthropy, inclusiveness and improving their community. The recipient is selected by an appointed committee.

### WSWA's Hot, New, Now! Award

WSWA's Hot! New! Now! Award is awarded to an up-and-coming craft wine or spirits brand that attends Access LIVE. At Access LIVE, an anonymous selection committee of WSWA members walk the exhibit floor to discover new, eligible brands. Based upon presentation, engagement, tasting and other considerations, the panel of judges then deliberate and pick the winner. Brands eligible for the award must not have launched or entered the marketplace before January 1, 2023.

Past winners of this award include Ette Spirits (2025), NightOwl Martini (2024), Cantadrink (2023), Skrewball Whiskey (2019), Gray Whale Gin (2018), and Bedlam Vodka (2017).

### WSWA Lifetime Leadership Award

This annual award honors an individual in the wholesale tier who has gone above and beyond in their service to the beverage alcohol industry, WSWA, and the community at large across their career. The WSWA Board selects the winner.

## WSWA Access Craft Wine & Spirits



### Did you know

WSWA is on a mission to develop and work closely with craft, startup and small-production wine and spirits brands by providing expert guidance, resources and best practices that help labels navigate industry challenges and identify opportunities? WSWA's Access Craft Wine and Spirits is dedicated to helping craft brands thrive in the world's most diverse alcohol marketplace.

The Access Craft Advisory Council brings together a team of Wholesaler Advisors, Brand Representatives, and Industry Partners to provide expert guidance and develop resources made by industry thought leaders for industry disruptors:

- Download the industry's first, comprehensive Distribution Playbook with trade insights from leading craft brand experts. This free, 120-page resource is filled with best practices for developing business plans, crafting marketing approaches and building sustainable growth strategies that attract distributors and drive brand growth.
- Find hours of public, in-depth webinars focused on topics like "Distribution & Scalability," "Digital Marketing for Success," "What Goes Into a Label?" and more at [www.wswa.org/accesscraft](http://www.wswa.org/accesscraft).

## Sponsorship Engagement

WSWA has a robust and **active sponsorship program** that continues to grow year after year. This program offers a multitude of **high-value engagement options** for sponsors at any level.

### Sponsors currently participate in support of the following:

- Access LIVE (formerly WSWA Convention & Exposition)
- Council for Leadership Development (CLD) Conference
- NextGen Leaders Summit
- Women's Leadership Council (WLC) Conference
- Access Craft Playbook

Benefits to sponsors include **brand exposure, thought leadership** through speaking opportunities, **access to industry leaders** and lead generation — just to name a few. Long-term partners find great value in showing goodwill and support through their generous sponsorships.

### Here are some of WSWA's key sponsors:















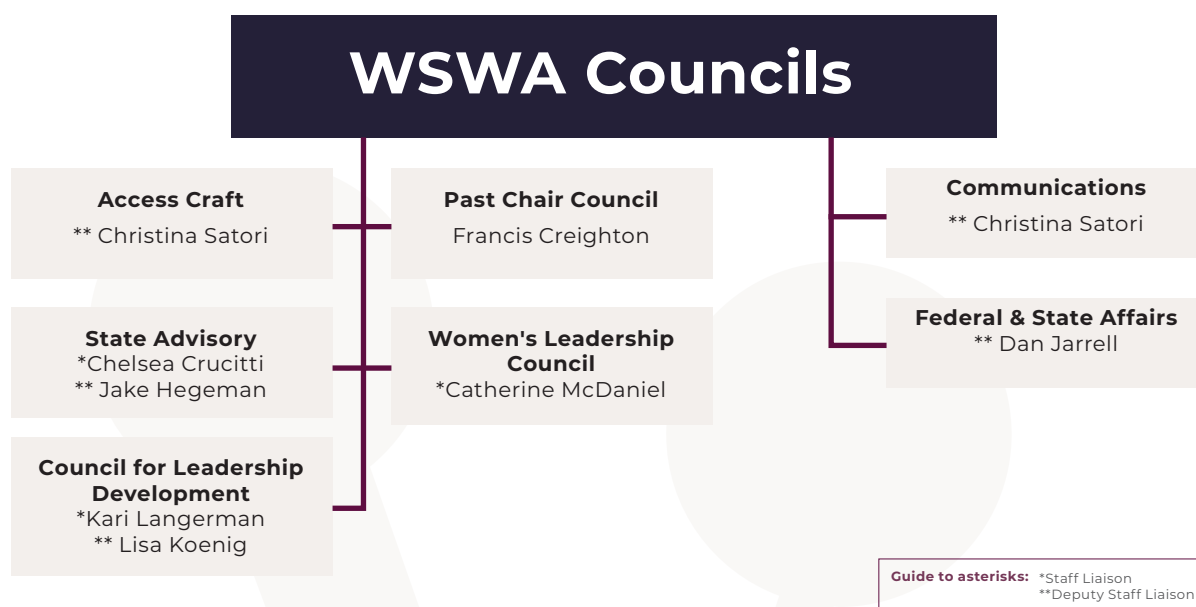


Through WSWA's meetings and events, members utilize networking opportunities to engage with sponsors, source potential new vendors and build upon existing partnerships. If you would like more information on the WSWA Sponsorship Program, contact Molly Fontaine ([molly.fontaine@wswa.org](mailto:molly.fontaine@wswa.org)), Director of Sales & Business Development.

## WSWA Councils

One of WSWA's most valuable assets is having members who are willing to **engage at all levels** within the association through voluntary, knowledge-sharing councils. These councils are a response to an ever-changing industry and marketplace to ensure we are aligned in how we react to and **advocate on issues**, how we **improve our business acumen**, how we **stay competitive in the marketplace** and how we provide avenues for employees to serve as thought leaders within their own roles.

Each council has a chair and vice chair that rotate from year to year. These groups provides excellent opportunities to connect with peers in the industry, share market trends, solve problems and unite to serve our industry.



## WSWA Legal Strategy Task Force

The WSWA Legal Strategy Task Force (LSTF) is a group of member company legal experts and state wholesale association heads and attorneys that meets regularly to discuss emerging litigation and policy issues at the federal and state level.

The LSTF is staffed by the WSWA legal and regulatory team and meets virtually monthly and in-person once annually as part of the WSWA Winter State Policy Conference. Member company legal and compliance leads are welcome to join the task force.

Recent LSTF activities include discussion around approaches to emerging litigation trends and the role of federal regulation of digital trade practice issues- something WSWA addressed in detail in its 2023 comment in response to TTB's Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on potential updates to the trade practice regulations.



## Public Policy Committee

The WSWA Public Policy Committee (PPC) allows members to discuss policy issues and make recommendations to the WSWA Board of Directors. Made up of 25 members from companies of all sizes, the PPC is designed to ensure WSWA policy positions have received appropriate discussion and vetting by the membership before being adopted by the board.

## Government Affairs Council



The WSWA Government Affairs Council is for members highly involved in **state and federal legislative affairs**. The group consists of state wholesaler association leaders and member company government affairs representatives from nearly every state.

WSWA state and federal affairs staff regularly engages with the Government Affairs Council to provide resources and **create a community** and platform that **foster discussion and solutions** regarding the political, legislative, regulatory and legal issues and threats facing America's family-owned wine and spirits wholesalers.

By providing a venue for wholesaler representatives to compare notes and discuss strategy, the council **increases the effectiveness of individual state associations**. The group also enables wholesalers to speak with a unified voice to policymakers across the country.

The Government Affairs Council meets once a month via conference call during state legislative sessions. While legislatures consider bills, council members also receive the **weekly State of Play** legislative newsletter that summarizes all the pending legislation that could impact wholesalers.

## HOW THE **THREE-TIER SYSTEM** OF ALCOHOL DISTRIBUTION WORKS

