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States Introduced 938 Alcohol and Hemp Beverage Bills This Year

A WSWA review found shifting fights over shipping, delivery, producer privileges and intoxicating hemp despite fewer enactments in several categories.

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State legislatures across the country have introduced 938 bills tied to alcohol and hemp beverages so far this year, according to a midyear review released Wednesday by the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America, underscoring how quickly rules around direct shipping, delivery, ready-to-drink products and intoxicating hemp continue to shift for the beverage business.

The Washington-based trade group said the pace of state activity remains heavy even as some categories have cooled from prior years. Its review points to fewer new alcohol shipping proposals in 2026 than in earlier sessions, but also notes that no shipping bills had been enacted as of mid-July.

Direct-to-consumer shipping remained one of the clearest pressure points. Six states — Hawaii, Iowa, Missouri, Mississippi, New Jersey and South Dakota — introduced bills that would have allowed spirits shipments directly to consumers. WSWA said that total was lower than in previous sessions. In Missouri, the group testified against a spirits shipping proposal and said regulators' data on enforcement problems tied to existing shipping privileges became part of the debate before the measure failed.

Wine shipping proposals took a different form. Because most states already allow wineries to ship directly to consumers, lawmakers have increasingly turned to expanding those privileges rather than creating them from scratch. Missouri, New Hampshire and New Jersey introduced bills to raise wine shipping limits per consumer. Of those, only New Jersey's remained pending in mid-July, with no action since January, according to the review. New York also introduced legislation on wine retailer shipping, but that bill had likewise seen no movement since January.

The report said no standalone common-carrier reporting bills were introduced this year, though a Massachusetts measure carried over from last year remains pending. WSWA has backed carrier reporting requirements as a way for regulators to identify unlicensed or illegal shipments. The group said bills in Iowa and South Dakota that stalled this year would have included such reporting rules, while an Oklahoma bill that also did not advance would have barred out-of-state retail alcohol shipments.

For wineries, distillers, wholesalers, retailers and delivery companies, those debates matter because direct shipping rules and carrier reporting requirements can shape compliance costs, market access and enforcement risk. Changes in those areas can also affect margins across the beverage supply chain, especially for businesses trying to expand e-commerce sales while navigating different state standards.

The review found more legislative attention this year on producer sales privileges. After a dip in 2025, lawmakers introduced 26 bills in 10 states on on-site sales, nine self-distribution bills in seven states and 13 satellite location bills in eight states.

Five of those measures became law. New Jersey and Virginia approved changes allowing certain producers to sell their own products for on-premise consumption. New Hampshire authorized wineries to self-distribute their products to other wineries. Colorado now allows distillers to operate up to two sales rooms. Oklahoma expanded distiller satellite privileges from one additional same-county location to two additional locations statewide.

Those changes could alter competitive conditions within the three-tier system by giving some producers more direct access to consumers or retail-style outlets. They also reflect continued state interest in carving out exceptions for local manufacturers while trying to preserve broader distribution structures.

Ready-to-drink beverages drew less legislative activity than in recent years. WSWA said RTD legislation declined again in 2026 and that no RTD bills had been enacted so far this year. The most common proposals focused on tax treatment, while several states considered whether to create a separate legal category for the products.

That issue is closely watched by spirits and malt beverage producers because tax rates and product classification can influence pricing, shelf placement and which parts of the industry gain an advantage as canned cocktails and similar drinks keep growing.

Delivery and takeout alcohol measures also continued to slow from their pandemic-era peak. WSWA said 12 delivery bills were introduced across six states, with one enactment: New Hampshire now allows on-premise licensees to deliver liquor with a food order. Seven to-go bills were introduced across four states. Delaware enacted a

law allowing on-premise licensees to sell one bottle of a private-label spirit for off-premise consumption.

Even with fewer new proposals, those laws remain important for restaurants, bars and suppliers because they can open incremental sales channels and change how alcohol reaches consumers outside traditional retail settings.

On intoxicating hemp beverages, the review described a sharp drop in legislative activity compared with last year, which it linked in part to a pending federal hemp ban. WSWA said there were nearly 60 fewer bill introductions and about a dozen fewer enactments than in 2025.

Still, several states moved ahead with notable changes. Illinois, Missouri, New Hampshire and New Jersey passed language directing intoxicating hemp beverages into dispensary channels if a federal ban takes effect. Connecticut and Minnesota amended existing hemp beverage laws to permit higher milligram caps or larger serving sizes. Massachusetts passed legislation creating a study of possible regulatory approaches for the category.

The hemp debate has become increasingly relevant for alcohol companies as more beverage makers explore THC-infused drinks and other adjacent products. State decisions on where those beverages can be sold, how strong they can be and whether they belong in dispensaries or mainstream retail channels could reshape investment plans and distribution strategies for both established alcohol companies and newer entrants.

WSWA framed its review as part of its ongoing work with members and state wholesaler associations to track proposals affecting wholesalers and the three-tier system. While many of this year’s bills have stalled or remain pending, the breadth of activity shows that statehouses continue to serve as the main battleground for alcohol and hemp beverage policy in the United States.