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U.S. Tequila Caucus Lawmakers Visit Jalisco Before Trade Talks

The delegation met tequila regulators and producers to review export rules, authenticity checks and Mexico’s protected designation.

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A delegation of U.S. lawmakers from the Congressional Tequila Caucus traveled to Jalisco on Wednesday for meetings with tequila industry officials and state authorities as both countries prepare for future trade and regulatory discussions involving the Mexican spirit.

The lawmakers, Reps. Salud Carbajal, Linda T. Sánchez and Emily Randall, visited the headquarters and laboratories of the Tequila Regulatory Council, known as the CRT, in Zapopan. There they met with representatives of the agave-tequila supply chain to review trade conditions, technical controls and the protection of tequila in the U.S. market.

The visit centered on bilateral cooperation and on the rules that govern tequila exports under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA. According to information released after the meeting, participants discussed keeping tequila recognized as a distinctive product of Mexico under the trade framework and preserving duty-free access to the U.S. market.

They also reviewed the future of a bilateral memorandum of understanding on tequila trade, cooperation between the CRT and the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, joint efforts against misuse of tequila’s denomination of origin, and support for the Certificate of Authenticity for Tequila Exports, known by its Spanish acronym CAETI.

The discussions reflect the commercial weight of tequila in North America and the political interest in protecting a product that is both a major export and a tightly regulated geographic indication. For the broader beverage industry, the issues under review could have consequences well beyond diplomacy. Maintaining legal recognition, tariff treatment and technical verification mechanisms is important for producers, importers and distributors because those controls can help protect authentic tequila, support orderly trade flows and reduce counterfeits that may distort the spirits market in the United States.

During the meeting, CRT President Aurelio López Rocha thanked the U.S. lawmakers for creating a bipartisan caucus in Congress focused specifically on tequila. He said their visit to Jalisco brought them to the place of origin and gave them a direct look at the land, people, institutions and control systems behind each bottle.

Carbajal, who co-chairs the caucus, highlighted his Mexican roots and the economic importance of the sector, according to the account of the visit. Sánchez focused on keeping tax and commercial channels active in ways that benefit both economies, while Randall stressed the need to strengthen bilateral relations to support mutual growth.

U.S. Consul General in Guadalajara Elizabeth Hoffman Franolich also took part in the meeting. She said relations between countries begin with relations between people and backed continued learning from Mexican production and oversight systems as a way to reinforce regional economic activity.

The Jalisco leg of the visit also included a private meeting with Gov. Pablo Lemus Navarro and members of his cabinet. The lawmakers later toured three local distilleries to observe the tequila production process more closely.

The trip comes at a time when tequila remains one of Mexico’s most visible alcoholic beverage exports and one of the most sensitive in terms of origin protection. Industry officials have long argued that preserving the denomination of origin depends not only on Mexican enforcement, but also on U.S. recognition and cooperation at the border, in labeling reviews and in market surveillance.

That concern was evident in the emphasis placed on technical work between the CRT and U.S. authorities. Laboratory cooperation and export authentication are central tools in verifying that products sold as tequila meet the standards tied to origin, composition and production methods. Those safeguards matter commercially because any weakening in verification can open space for imitation products, create price pressure and complicate compliance for legitimate brands operating in the U.S. spirits market.

The Congressional Tequila Caucus was created to focus attention in Washington on the trade, economic and cultural issues tied to tequila. The lawmakers’ decision to visit Jalisco, the center of tequila production, gave them direct exposure to the regulatory structure that supports the category, from testing laboratories to export certification and producer oversight.

While no new policy measures were announced during the visit, the message from both sides was that tequila’s status in bilateral trade should remain protected and that institutional channels between regulators and industry groups should continue. With tequila trade deeply integrated into the North American beverage business, any future decisions on tariffs, recognition, certification or anti-counterfeiting enforcement would be closely watched by distillers, wholesalers, retailers and hospitality companies on both sides of the border.