vinetur

Alcohol lobbyists urged state attorneys general to preserve the federal hemp THC ban timetable

Emails obtained by Politico show representatives for Anheuser-Busch, Molson Coors and Diageo pushed officials to oppose any congressional delay

Saturday, October 31, 2026



Lobbyists representing major alcohol companies urged state attorneys general to press Congress to keep a federal crackdown on hemp-derived THC products on schedule, according to a Politico report published Thursday, October 29, based on internal emails obtained through public records requests.

The report said lobbyists for Anheuser-Busch, Molson Coors and Diageo asked attorneys general to support a letter opposing any effort by Congress to delay or weaken a pending federal ban on many hemp THC products. The emails were obtained by a hemp industry representative through records requests and shared with Politico, the outlet said.

One of the emails, sent in July to North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley, came from Todd Kranda, a partner at the law firm Kelsch, Ruff, Kranda, Nagle and Ludwig. Politico reported that Kranda said he was working on behalf of Anheuser-Busch. In the message, he warned that some senators wanted to extend what he called a loophole for hemp products as Congress debated a short-term government funding measure.

In August, Wrigley, a Republican, joined 34 other state and territorial attorneys general in sending Congress a bipartisan letter that asked federal lawmakers to reject “any effort to delay, repeal, suspend, or weaken” the hemp ban and to make sure it takes effect as enacted.

The fight centers on a fast-growing market for intoxicating hemp products, including drinks made with hemp-derived THC. Under the 2018 Farm Bill, hemp derivatives with less than 0.3% delta-9 THC on a dry-weight basis became legal under federal law. But legislation signed by President Donald Trump in late 2025 changed the definition of hemp so that only products with no more than 0.4 milligrams of total THC per container would remain legal after November 12.

Congress later delayed the effective date for most of that change. Under a funding bill Trump signed in September, most hemp THC products are now set to become illegal on December 11 instead of November 12, giving lawmakers more time to write a regulatory framework. One part of the crackdown is still scheduled for November 12: synthetic cannabinoids that are not capable of being naturally produced by the cannabis plant.

The political pressure campaign described in the emails comes as Congress remains divided over whether hemp THC products should be banned or regulated. Several lawmakers in both parties have introduced proposals that would keep many products legal while imposing rules on testing, packaging, labeling, age limits and taxes.

Rep. Morgan Griffith, a Virginia Republican, told Roll Call this week that he wants his hemp regulation bill to move before the December 11 deadline and said it could potentially be attached to a broader budget reconciliation package during the lame-duck session after the November 3 midterm elections. Griffith and Rep. Marc Veasey, a Texas Democrat, have introduced the Hemp Enforcement, Modernization, and Protection Act, which would preserve the legal market while tightening federal oversight.

Griffith also said his proposal could be paired with a measure related to taxes on hemp-derived products, including a bill from Rep. Beth Van Duyne, a Texas Republican, that would keep hemp THC beverages legal while taxing and regulating them in a way similar to alcohol. Other lawmakers have circulated bills with similar goals. Rep. James Comer of Kentucky has discussed legislation that would delay the federal ban and add requirements on packaging, testing and age limits. Rep. Andy Barr, also of Kentucky, has filed a broader proposal covering manufacturing, labeling, sales, taxation and a minimum purchase age of 21.

The White House has also pushed Congress to avoid a sweeping ban. In June, Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought told House Speaker Mike Johnson that the administration wanted lawmakers to ensure the fair treatment of hemp products. The letter pointed to efforts to keep many hemp products legal while adding rules and taxes. In a separate statement in June, OMB said the administration wanted Americans to keep access to appropriate full-spectrum CBD products while restricting items that pose serious health risks. Trump made a similar appeal in April, urging Congress to update the law so consumers could continue to buy full-spectrum CBD products.

That stance has exposed a split not only in Congress but across industries that sell or compete with intoxicating beverages. Some alcohol-linked interests appear to have backed a harder line in the emails described by Politico, while other business groups

have argued for regulation instead of prohibition. The National Restaurant Association recently urged congressional leaders to delay the federal ban on hemp THC beverages and replace it with a regulatory system that protects consumers while allowing the market to continue.

The dispute matters beyond cannabis policy because hemp-derived drinks are emerging as a competing category alongside beer, wine and spirits. A strict federal ban could limit that competition and shut off market access for THC beverages, while a regulated approach could allow the segment to expand under rules closer to those used for alcohol. Some traditional beverage companies have watched that shift closely as retailers add more hemp-derived products to shelves and lawmakers debate how they should be taxed and sold.

Retailers and producers are already positioning themselves for either outcome. Target has expanded hemp THC drink sales into more states, according to Marijuana Moment. Herb Light, a company that makes low-dose THC beverages, recently began a promotion that lets customers send a six-pack to members of Congress along with a letter supporting legislation to keep hemp THC drinks legal under a new regulatory structure.

The issue has also divided cannabis advocates. The Marijuana Policy Project has urged supporters to ask Congress to reverse the scheduled ban and create rules for cannabinoid products instead. But some industry voices have taken the opposite view. An opinion piece published by Marijuana Moment from a former Marijuana Policy Project staff member who now works for the American Trade Association for Cannabis and Hemp argued that intoxicating hemp products have gone too far and should not be used as a back door to broader legalization.

For now, the most immediate deadlines remain November 12, when the synthetic cannabinoid provision is due to take effect, and December 11, when many other hemp THC products are set to become illegal unless Congress acts. The emails reported by Politico add a new element to that fight by showing how major alcohol interests tried to enlist law enforcement officials as lawmakers decide whether the federal government will ban a fast-growing hemp market or regulate it.