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Beer Institute targets aluminum, taxes, hemp in lobbying push to a Democratic-led Congress

Brian Crawford said the brewer group will press lawmakers on can costs, excise burdens, regulatory uncertainty in hemp-derived drinks

Tuesday, November 10, 2026



The Beer Institute plans to keep aluminum, tax policy and hemp at the center of its federal agenda as it starts work with a new Congress that has a Democratic majority, according to comments by the group’s president, Brian Crawford, reported by Beer

Business Daily.

Crawford’s message points to a period of renewed lobbying and outreach in Washington after the election results changed the political balance on Capitol Hill. For brewers, the issues he highlighted go beyond routine trade group priorities. They touch core costs, product competition and the rules that could shape future growth in the broader beverage market.

Beer Business Daily said Crawford described the need for engagement with the incoming Congress after what the publication referred to as a blue wave. The Beer Institute, which represents large and small brewers as well as beer importers, has long treated tax and trade policy as central issues. The addition of hemp to that short list shows how much attention the drinks industry is paying to emerging categories that sit near beer in retail channels and consumer spending.

Aluminum remains a major concern because cans are a basic packaging material across the beer business. Any policy that raises the price of aluminum can quickly move through the supply chain, from can makers to breweries and then to distributors and retailers. For brewers, especially those that rely heavily on packaged products, higher metal costs can narrow margins or force price increases. That pressure can extend beyond beer because canned cocktails, hard seltzers, soft drinks and energy drinks depend on the same packaging system.

Tax policy is another issue with broad consequences. Federal excise taxes and other beer-related taxes affect production costs, pricing and investment decisions. Industry groups have argued for years that more favorable tax treatment can support hiring, capital spending and new product development, while higher tax burdens can limit flexibility for producers already facing rising costs for ingredients, freight and labor. Crawford’s emphasis suggests the Beer Institute expects tax debates to remain active under the new congressional alignment.

Hemp policy has become a more visible part of the discussion as beverage companies watch the fast-changing market for hemp-derived products. The issue is sensitive because the legal and regulatory framework is still evolving. Different states have taken different approaches, and federal agencies and lawmakers have not settled every

question on how these products should be classified, marketed or sold. For beer producers and other drinks companies, that uncertainty matters. It can affect competition for consumer dollars, determine who is allowed to sell which products and shape the compliance burden for companies that want to enter adjacent categories.

Beer Business Daily's account suggests that the Beer Institute sees all three issues as immediate priorities rather than longer-term concerns. That reflects the way policy decisions in Washington can reach the beer aisle quickly. Aluminum policy can influence can costs. Tax decisions can change the economics of brewing and distribution. Hemp rules can affect what products sit next to beer in stores and how beverage companies plan for future demand.

The focus on Congress is also significant because many of these questions require legislative attention or are heavily influenced by lawmakers even when federal agencies play a direct role. Trade measures, tariff policy and tax legislation come through Washington politics. Hemp oversight, while shaped by regulators, is also tied to congressional action and pressure. A shift in partisan control can change committee leadership, the pace of hearings and the likelihood that certain proposals move forward.

For brewers, the stakes are not limited to the largest companies. Smaller craft producers are often more exposed to swings in packaging and freight costs because they have less purchasing power and less room to absorb sudden increases. They may also have fewer resources to track and respond to fast-moving regulatory changes. That makes trade group advocacy especially important in periods of political transition.

Crawford's comments, as described by Beer Business Daily, indicate that the Beer Institute is preparing for that transition by keeping its policy agenda tightly focused. The organization appears to be signaling that while election outcomes can change the tone in Washington, the industry's basic concerns remain the same: input costs, tax treatment and the rules around emerging products.

That agenda matters across the beverage sector because beer does not operate in isolation. Brewers compete for shelf space, packaging supplies and consumer spending with wine, spirits, ready-to-drink cocktails and nonalcoholic drinks. A change in

aluminum costs can ripple through many categories at once. A tax shift can alter relative pricing across alcohol segments. New hemp rules could open opportunities for some companies while creating new competitive pressure for others.

Beer Business Daily did not present Crawford’s remarks as a broad reset of the Beer Institute’s strategy. Instead, they suggest continuity in the group’s main federal priorities at a time when many companies are reassessing how politics and regulation could affect demand and costs. In that sense, the association’s focus on aluminum, taxes and hemp offers a concise view of the pressures now shaping decision-making in the U.S. drinks business.