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Beer Institute puts intoxicating hemp regulation, aluminum costs at the top of its 2027 agenda

The trade group signaled that brewers expect policy fights over THC drinks and can prices to shape the year ahead

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The Beer Institute is making regulation of intoxicating hemp products and high aluminum prices a top priority for the coming year, underscoring where one of the beer industry’s main Washington trade groups expects policy pressure to build.

Brian Crawford, the group’s president and chief executive, laid out that agenda at the Beer Institute’s annual membership meeting in Washington on Nov. 12, according to Brewbound. The industry publication reported on Monday, Nov. 16, that Crawford pointed to intoxicating hemp and aluminum pricing as key issues for the organization in the year ahead.

The priorities reflect two concerns that reach beyond beer and into the wider drinks market. Hemp-derived intoxicating products, including beverages with THC, have expanded quickly under a patchwork of federal and state rules. For beer makers and other beverage companies, that creates a competitive issue as well as a regulatory one, because similar products can face very different standards depending on how they are classified and where they are sold.

That uneven landscape has become more important for brewers as beverage alcohol companies look for growth outside traditional beer. Some producers have entered or explored hemp-derived drinks, while others have argued that intoxicating products should be subject to clearer safety, labeling and age-restriction rules. The Beer Institute’s decision to elevate the issue suggests the group expects the debate over intoxicating hemp to remain active in legislatures and among regulators.

Aluminum pricing is a separate issue, but one with direct consequences for brewery costs. Cans are a core packaging format for much of the U.S. beer business, especially for craft brewers and larger producers with broad retail distribution. When aluminum prices rise, or when related trade and supply chain pressures push up can costs, breweries can face tighter margins and more difficult pricing decisions. That can ripple across the broader beverage sector because canned packaging is widely used by producers of beer, hard seltzer, ready-to-drink cocktails and nonalcoholic drinks.

The Beer Institute did not, based on the information publicly available from the meeting coverage, release a detailed public policy blueprint with specific proposals tied to those two priorities. But Crawford’s remarks place them at the center of the group’s lobbying and advocacy work as companies prepare for another year of debate over intoxicating hemp rules and manufacturing costs.

The organization has long represented major brewing interests in Washington, and its priorities can offer a useful signal about the issues the industry believes are most likely to shape operating conditions. In this case, the focus points to a mix of regulatory competition and basic input costs: on one side, the rise of hemp-derived intoxicating beverages sold under rules that can differ sharply from alcohol; on the other, the cost of a key material needed to put beer on shelves.

That combination matters for producers because it touches both demand and margins. If hemp-derived drinks keep growing under looser or inconsistent rules, beer companies may push harder for standards they view as more comparable across categories. If aluminum remains expensive, brewers may continue to face pressure on packaging budgets even if consumer demand stabilizes. The Beer Institute’s agenda indicates that, in Washington, the industry sees both issues as central to the business environment heading into 2027.