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Six alcohol trade groups urge Congress to let a hemp THC crackdown take effect on Dec. 11

Beer, wine and spirits leaders said an extension would preserve a lightly regulated market for intoxicating hemp products

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Senior leaders from six major U.S. beer, wine and spirits groups urged Congress to reject any effort to delay a federal crackdown on intoxicating hemp-derived THC products, arguing that lawmakers should let a Dec. 11 deadline take effect as

scheduled.

In a sharply worded letter to Congress, the organizations said proposals to extend what they called the THC hemp loophole would preserve a market that remains lightly regulated and would do so without the normal legislative review. The letter said the proposals “fail to ensure a safe, well-regulated marketplace” and added that they “have not received a single committee hearing, markup or any other substantive Congressional action or review.”

The letter was signed by the chief executives of the American Distilled Spirits Alliance, the Beer Institute, WineAmerica, the American Whiskey Association, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States and the Wine Institute. Together, the groups represent large parts of the nation’s alcohol supply industry.

The dispute centers on hemp products that critics say have expanded far beyond what Congress intended when it loosened federal hemp rules. In the 2014 farm bill, Congress authorized a pilot program for hemp production and research. In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congress drew a distinction between marijuana and hemp and supported non-intoxicating industrial and cannabidiol uses of hemp.

The alcohol groups told lawmakers that those changes were later exploited by companies using chemical processes to convert naturally derived cannabinoids into intoxicating THC products. In their letter, they said that helped create a fast-growing market for products they described as largely unregulated, untested and untaxed. They also said those products are being sold despite the Food and Drug Administration’s position that adding intoxicating cannabinoids to food is illegal.

Congress moved to tighten the rules in 2025, when lawmakers passed and President Donald Trump signed a measure setting a limit of 0.4 milligrams of total THC per retail container. Supporters of hemp-derived THC drinks and other products have argued that the standard effectively amounts to a ban on using THC hemp in foods and beverages.

The supplier groups said businesses were given a full year to adjust. “This provision must be allowed to take full effect without further delay or extension on Dec. 11, 2026,” the letter said.

They argued that Congress has not done the work needed to create a separate federal framework for a new class of intoxicating hemp products that, in their view, resembles marijuana. The letter said establishing a system that protects consumers and businesses would require substantial time, expertise and coordination, and could not be done through a late-stage legislative patch.

The debate exposes a widening split inside the broader beverage business. While beer, wine and spirits suppliers want the current restriction to take effect, the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America has backed a different approach. The wholesalers group supports legalizing THC beverages and has said those products should be regulated in a system similar to the one used for alcohol.

The supplier groups rejected that idea as premature. Their letter said the alcohol industry operates under more than 4,000 federal laws and regulations, a structure built over decades. Trying to adapt that system quickly to hemp-derived intoxicants, they said, would not address the full range of concerns raised by state attorneys general, law enforcement groups and public health advocates.

The letter also warned against what it described as rushed proposals from THC interests. It said those plans seek to create “a backdoor” to the federal legalization of some intoxicating THC products without a broader debate over marijuana policy or a fully developed safety regime.

Consumer safety was a central theme in the message to Congress. The groups said shoppers should be able to trust that products sold on retail shelves are safe, especially when those products can intoxicate users. That argument has become more prominent as hemp-derived THC drinks have spread into convenience stores, liquor stores and other outlets in states with different rules and enforcement practices.

The fight matters beyond drug policy because it could shape what beverage companies are allowed to sell, how retailers allocate shelf space and how alcohol competes with a growing category of THC-infused drinks. It also highlights a divide between producers and wholesalers over whether hemp-derived intoxicants should be shut out under the December standard or folded into a regulated beverage market.

Congress now faces pressure from competing parts of the industry. On one side are alcohol suppliers arguing that the December deadline reflects a law already passed and should not be weakened. On the other are backers of hemp-derived THC beverages seeking more time or a new framework that would keep those products on the market. The outcome will help determine whether the federal government treats intoxicating hemp drinks as a prohibited byproduct of a loophole or as a category that deserves its own long-term regulatory structure.