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CONTACT: Zack Blair
OFFICE: 615-741-7628

TABC Builds on Recent Success

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Almost one year ago, Tennesseans realized something pretty simple; wine could be sold in grocery stores. But the process before, during, and after was anything but simple. The passage of the wine in grocery store (WIGS) legislation represented the most comprehensive change in alcoholic beverage law in the state's history. The law significantly altered the paradigm for the sale of alcoholic beverages in the state and the state's role in regulating the industry. Most importantly, the law has so far allowed approximately 648 grocery stores across the state to sell wine, and more continue to apply for licenses each day.

After the successful implementation of WIGS, the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission continued its efforts to effectively regulate the alcoholic beverage industry. For example, a few weeks ago, the TABC adopted comprehensive rules addressing ambiguities in the WIGS legislation. This past month, new Regulatory Officers and the existing Special Agents completed hundreds of renewal inspections for WIGS licensees and assisted these establishments with the new renewal process. Additionally, in the past year, the TABC has posted nearly 75 frequently asked questions on its website, including detailed analysis and illustrative hypotheticals due to the growth of the industry. The TABC also created an email distribution list to provide clarity for this growing industry, which now contains nearly 1,200 subscribers.

Additionally, the General Assembly passed the agency's proposed legislation this session, Public Chapter 147. Signed into law on April 17, 2017, Public Chapter 147 makes various clarifications to Tennessee alcoholic beverage law to improve the day-to-day operations of the agency. Also this session, Governor Haslam's budget included funding for four new positions for the TABC to meet the demands of overseeing the growing number of new licensees.

"We've made tremendous strides at the TABC due to the hard work and dedication of our staff. We remain committed to going above and beyond what's expected to provide great customer service on behalf of the state. The volume of user-friendly content that we've produced coupled with our rule/policy updates, legislation, and email distribution list illustrate the initiative we've shown to improve the operations of our agency and its relationship with a growing industry," Executive Director Clayton Byrd said.

With the appointment of a new Chief Law Enforcement Officer, Bond Tubbs, and Director of Risk Management, former Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development Mark Reineke, the TABC continues to improve business processes and develop greater efficiencies. The new leadership team remains committed to fulfilling the agency's mission to be the most fair, effective and responsible state regulators of the alcoholic beverage industry in the country.



“The entire alcohol beverage industry has also experienced the challenges that the wine in grocery stores law created,” said Hank Hildebrand, General Counsel to the Wine and Spirit Wholesalers of Tennessee. “The industry is grateful that the current staff of the TABC has embraced the challenges that this new law presented and that the staff – from the director on down – have worked to assist the members of the industry comply with the new law and the new regulations. It is our hope that the vigor the TABC has brought to this transformative process will continue. The Wine and Spirit Wholesalers of Tennessee stands in support of the efforts of the TABC and commends all of the members of the TABC with the success that it has brought to the regulatory process.”

For more information regarding the 2017 WIGS renewal process, please visit <http://tn.gov/assets/entities/abc/attachments/17WIGSRenewal.pdf>. You can find the TABC legislation at <http://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/110/pub/pc0147.pdf>. For more information about the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission, visit our website at <http://tn.gov/abc>.

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