



e-Update BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

WHOLESALE BEER & WINE ASSOCIATION OF OHIO

COLUMBUS // SUMMER 2026

Join Us for the 2026 FALL CONVENTION September 16 & 17



It's time to register for the WBWAO Fall Convention, slated for WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 and THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17. This year's convention is shorter, with one less overnight stay, but it is still packed with informative speakers and an opportunity to discuss our industry and the

"state of affairs" on the political front.

We will meet in Columbus at the OSU Marriott, located at 3100 Olentangy River Road near the OSU campus. Join us for a Welcome Reception from 4:30-6 p.m. on Wednesday, September 16, followed by a 7:30 breakfast and 8:30 morning session.

Guest speakers, confirmed as of this newsletter publication, include the following:

- Amanda Gleason, *Chief Sales Officer at Blake's Beverage Company*
- Larry O'Brien, *Master Sommelier at Jackson Family Estates*
- Cameron Scholvin, *Chief Operating Officer at Columbus Blue Jackets*
- Steve Fechheimer, *Chief Executive Officer at Crazy Mountain*
- Bonnie Herzog, *Managing Director & Senior Consumer Analyst, Goldman Sachs*

Please register you and your team members today at WBWAO.org in the Members Only page, News & Events. Reservations for the OSU Marriott must be made and paid for through WBWAO to receive the group rate. The room rate includes all applicable taxes.

The deadline for guaranteed hotel reservations is August 17. After that date, we cannot guarantee room availability or the group rate.

2026 NBWA Legislative Conference in Washington D.C.

A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who took the time to attend the 2026 NBWA Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. in April. The group worked hard to deliver our messages to congressional representatives and staff members. And we enjoyed a nice dinner in the nation's capitol!



MARTY WILLARD AND JASON EDWARDS, SUPERIOR BEVERAGE, WITH CONGRESSMAN MICHAEL RULLI



MARTY WILLARD, SUPERIOR BEVERAGE; **SARAH MATESICH,** MATESICH DISTRIBUTING; CONGRESSMAN TROY BALDERSON; **JIM MATESICH,** MATESICH DISTRIBUTING; AND **JASON EDWARDS,** SUPERIOR BEVERAGE IN THE CONGRESSMAN'S OFFICE

RACHAEL BAUGHMAN AND MIKE TRAMONTE OF TRAMONTE DISTRIBUTING MET WITH CONGRESSWOMAN EMILIA SYKES

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

by Jacob C. Evans, Counsel for Legislative Affairs

Ohio's 2026 Governor's Race: A Test Of Candidates, Coalitions and Circumstance

Ohio's 2026 governor's race presents voters with two candidates who have unusually high name recognition but distinctly different public profiles.

Republican Vivek Ramaswamy enters the general election with national visibility, substantial fundraising capacity and the benefit of running in a state that has moved steadily toward the Republican Party. Democrat Amy Acton brings broad recognition from her service as Ohio's health director and is emphasizing public service, affordability and a more consensus-oriented style of leadership.

Ramaswamy is making an ambitious case for reform, growth and a more energetic state government; Acton is offering competence, stability and practical relief from rising costs. Their running mates—Senate President Rob McColley and former Ohio Democratic Party chair David Pepper—add substantial state and political experience to tickets led by candidates who have never held elective office.

The early strategic question is whether Ramaswamy can translate national prominence into confidence in a state-focused agenda and whether Acton can turn personal goodwill into a coalition broad enough to overcome Ohio's Republican lean.

As the campaign moves from biography to governing priorities, two issues are emerging as useful tests of those competing messages: property taxes and the rapid expansion of data centers. Both combine immediate household concerns with larger questions about growth, public investment and who ultimately bears the cost of change.

On property taxes, the debate has moved well beyond conventional relief proposals. Ramaswamy has called for rolling property-tax levels back to where they stood before the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and has supported changes to

Ohio's 20-mill floor. Acton has emphasized targeted relief, including expanded homestead-related assistance, alongside a working-family tax cut and broader changes intended to make the state tax code more favorable to middle- and lower-income Ohioans.

The political appeal of relief is obvious; the harder policy question is how it would be structured and whether the state would replace revenue now supporting schools, police, fire and municipal services. The candidates' answers will reveal not only how aggressively they intend to reduce taxes but also how they understand the relationship between state and local government.

Data centers present a related but distinct test. Ohio's sales and use tax exemption for qualifying computer data centers was created in 2013 during the Kasich administration and expanded in later budgets. It can provide partial or complete exemptions for eligible equipment—including servers, cooling systems and certain electrical infrastructure—when projects meet investment and payroll thresholds.

The policy helped Ohio compete for capital-intensive technology projects, but the scale of AI-driven development has sharpened questions about forgone tax revenue, demand for electricity and water, transparency and the cost of new utility infrastructure.

Here, the central disagreement may be less about whether Ohio should welcome data centers than about the terms on which they are built. Ramaswamy's broader economic message emphasizes growth, innovation and attracting investment. Acton has called for explicit cost guardrails that would require data centers and their investors—not residential ratepayers or local communities—to bear the added costs associated with electricity, water and other services.

The next governor will therefore face a practical question that reaches beyond campaign rhetoric: whether tax incentives, utility rules and disclosure requirements designed for an earlier generation of data centers remain adequate for the much larger facilities now being proposed.

The governor's race also will not unfold in isolation. The simultaneous U.S. Senate contest between Democrat Sherrod Brown and Republican Jon Husted will shape turnout, field organization, advertising and the overall political atmosphere. Brown brings a well-established statewide identity and a long record of appealing to working-class voters; Husted offers Republicans a familiar Ohio leader with deep experience in state government.

The two campaigns should strengthen party organization, but they may also encourage voters to evaluate each office separately. Some may be drawn to Brown's economic message while preferring Ramaswamy's vision for state government; others may favor Husted's experience while responding positively to Acton's leadership style. The amount of ticket-splitting will be one of the clearest measures of whether Ohio elections are now driven mainly by party identification or whether candidate qualities continue to matter.

That same perspective is useful when reading the early polls. A narrow lead for either nominee is a snapshot, not evidence that one side has established a durable advantage. At this stage, the most important finding is simply that the race is competitive: each candidate appears capable of holding a partisan base while still having room to define the election for less committed voters.

Ohio's recent voting history gives Republicans a structural advantage, but close polling suggests that voters have not reduced the contest to party label alone. The more revealing questions are which

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE OHIO LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING & LUNCHEON ON MARCH 25

candidate is expanding beyond the base, which issues are moving undecided voters and whether either coalition is becoming more durable over time.

Events beyond either campaign's control could still reshape that environment. The national political mood—including public reaction to the conflict involving Iran and the effect of instability in the Strait of Hormuz on gasoline prices—may influence how voters judge the party in power nationally and the broader direction of the country.

The resulting volatility in oil markets illustrates how quickly an overseas conflict can become a domestic concern, especially when voters encounter it at the gas pump. Ohio's ballot also includes Libertarian nominee Don Kissick. In a close race, even a modest third-party vote could matter, although it would be a mistake to assume those voters otherwise would break uniformly toward either major-party candidate.

Ultimately, however, turnout may be decisive. Democrats will need strong participation in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton and Lucas counties, along with continued competitiveness in the suburbs. Republicans will look to reproduce the large margins they have built throughout rural and exurban Ohio while maintaining their advantage among voters who now identify consistently with the party.

Early primary participation can offer clues about organization and enthusiasm, but it is not a reliable forecast of a November electorate that will be larger and less partisan. The race may therefore answer a broader question about modern Ohio: has the state's political realignment made statewide elections largely predictable, or do voters still apply a distinct standard when choosing a governor based on leadership, temperament and confidence in a candidate's ability to manage the state?



PRESIDENT MIKE KLEPPER AND VICE PRESIDENT SARAH MATESICH WELCOME OHIO REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIRMAN ALEX TRIANTAFILOU TO THE LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING AT THE WBWO OFFICE IN COLUMBUS.



JUSTIN BERRY, STATE REPRESENTATIVE GAYLE MANNING AND JOHN HIPPI



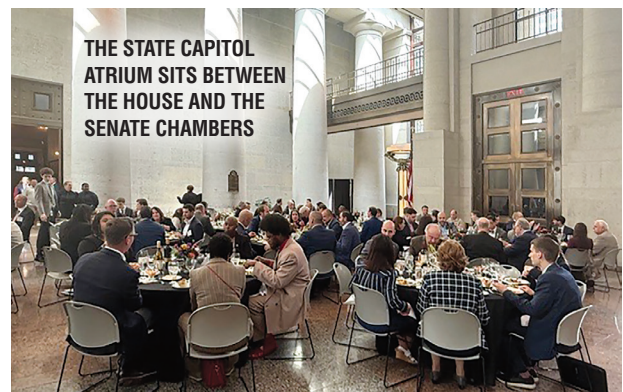
SENATOR SHANE WILKIN GIVES A THUMBS UP



OHIO DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR KATHLEEN CLYDE SPEAKS TO WBWO MEMBERS



JOAN FRANKS, SARAH MATESICH, STATE REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN MILLER AND JIM MATESICH



THE STATE CAPITOL ATRIUM SITS BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE CHAMBERS



JACOB EVANS JOINED SPEAKER MATT HUFFMAN AND OHIO REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIRMAN ALEX TRIANTAFILOU AT AN EVENT FOR VIVEK RAMASWAMY ON APRIL 9 IN COLUMBUS



ON MARCH 9, PRESIDENT MIKE KLEPPER PRESENTED A SENATE COMMENDATION RECOGNIZING IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT GREGG HIPPS CONTRIBUTION TO WBWO AND THE STATE OF OHIO

REGULATORY ISSUES UPDATE

by David A. Raber, General Counsel, and
Jacob C. Evans, Counsel for Legislative Affairs

Highlights of the 2026 Liquor Control Commission Rule Review Process

The Liquor Control Commission held public hearings in May, June, and July 2026 to receive public comments on 32 administrative rules up for review. The list includes several rules of significant importance to wholesalers.

The Commission did not propose any changes to:

- Rule 4 – Sacramental wine
- Rule 74 – Regulates and stabilizes the manner of distributing and selling bottled wine within the state (“split case fee”)

Other rules of interest to wholesale distributor businesses under consideration this year include:

- Rule 30 – Beer, wine, mixed beverage, or spirituous liquor tasting
- Rule 32 – Samples
- Rule 44 – Advertising
- Rule 45 – Contests, prizes, sales incentive programs, rebates, or other promotions

- Rule 46 – Miscellaneous restrictions
- Rule 67 – Sales reports of A-1 or B-1 permit holders
- Rule 79 – Restrictions on warrantless administrative inspections

The Division of Liquor Control and/or the Ohio Investigative Unit proposed amendments to Rule 30 and Rule 46. WBWAO submitted both written and oral testimony on these changes. Regarding Rule 46, WBWAO opposed a proposed amendment to the notification requirements when a stay on a permit is terminated. Regarding Rule 30, WBWAO opposed a proposed subsection (B) amendment that would replace the current per-serving limits on tastings with a cumulative total-amount-per-consumer-per-event cap, and requested a targeted exemption to proposed subsection (F)(2), which would otherwise prohibit spirituous liquor tastings — including private tastings at wholesale distributors’ Class B warehouse facilities — at permit premises lacking on-premises consumption privileges.

Regarding the proposed amendments to Rule 79, WBWAO offered testimony stating that the proposal to allow investigations at any time someone is on the permit premises is overbroad and should be redrafted to comply with the time, place, and scope restrictions required under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Finally, there was a proposed amendment to Rule 14 regarding the transfer of liquor permits and the definition of family; while this would likely be of little concern to wholesale distributors in their daily business operations, it is a matter of interest on potential future transfers. WBWAO will continue to monitor the rule-review process and advocate for the interests of Ohio’s wholesale distributors.

Please contact us if you would like additional information regarding any of these rules.



BRIAN OAKES OF HEIDELBERG LEADS THE LSC FELLOWS THROUGH THE WAREHOUSE, HIGHLIGHTING THE LOGISTICAL SET-UP OF THE FACILITY.

Since 1963, the Ohio General Assembly has sponsored a 13-month paid internship, placing 24 individuals into positions in the Senate, House, the Legislative Services Commission and Government Telecommunications.

This allows these interns to fully participate in the operation of state government, with many of them earning full time employment in the Chamber

INTERNS

Learn About Our Industry

or agency in which they are placed. Numerous legislators, current staff and agency employees throughout Ohio government and the lobbying community are former LSC Fellows.

The WBWAO has recently begun hosting each class and providing background on our industry, the role of wholesalers and giving them a tour of a facility. LSC also has worked to get the Fellows in businesses across Ohio, and on July 18, WBWAO was able to host the Fellows at Heidelberg in Moraine. Dave Raber and Jacob Evans provided the history of the alcohol industry and the basis for many of our policies today; Rob Van Metre and Brian Oakes of Heidelberg

provided insight on the operations and responsibilities of wholesalers and their role in the three tier system.

The LSC posted a description and photos of the “July seminar” on LinkedIn, thanking WBWAO and Heidelberg.



LSC FELLOWS LEARNING ABOUT THE PACKAGING PROCESS TO PREPARE ITEMS FOR DELIVERY.

Spotlight on WBWAO Allied Member

Meet **VXP**

VOLUME x PROFIT TECHNOLOGIES

VXP may be one of WBWAO's newer Allied members, two years and counting, but the company's roots in the Ohio beer business go back a lot further than that.

Volume x Profit Tech (VXP) is a sales compensation and performance platform built specifically for beer and wine distributors. The idea is simple: put every salesperson's goals, incentives, and results on one scoreboard, updated daily, so reps know exactly what they're getting paid to do and owners know their comp dollars are driving volume and gross profit. Pay-for-performance plans, MBOs, incentives all tracked in one place, without the end-of-month spreadsheet scramble.

What sets VXP apart is who built it. President Bud Dunn ran a beer distributorship for 15 years before starting the company, along with a team of industry experts, and every piece of the platform came out of problems he lived with as an operator: comp plans nobody could track, incentives that died in a binder, and reps who didn't know where they stood until the check showed up. Today VXP works with more than 60 distributors across the country, tracking over \$7 billion in sales for more than 3,000 salespeople. Bud also hosts the Tapped In Sales Podcast, a weekly show on sales and leadership in the beer business.



BUD DUNN
President



GEORGE KOSSL
Vice President of Sales

Members will recognize Bud and Vice President of Sales George Kossel of the VXP team from the annual convention and the golf outing — they don't miss either one.

For Bud, membership in WBWAO is a full-circle story. His first career in beer started right here in Ohio, working for Mike and Kris Klepper at Beerco in Tiffin while attending school there. "I learned this business from the ground up in an Ohio wholesaler's warehouse," says Bud. "So being an Allied member all these years later isn't just business, it's coming back to where it all started."

These days, Bud lives in Florida with his wife, Sara, though he'll tell you he's a Michigander at heart. When he's not working with distributors or recording the podcast, you'll find him on the golf course. "Any excuse to mix beer people and golf is a good day in my book."

Thank you, Bud, George, and VXP, for your support of WBWAO!



NEW ALLIED MEMBERS

Please welcome Allied Members who have recently joined WBWAO!

► ABCO FLEET SERVICES

Steve Mason
4427 Midlothian Turnpike
Crestwood, IL 60418
708-417-3097
steve.mason@abcotruck.com

► HY-TEK INTRALOGISTICS

Erik Koenig
2222 Rickenbacker Pkwy W
Columbus, Ohio 43217
513-310-0218
erik.koenig@hy-tek.com

► JACKSON LEWIS PC

Karen Dunlevey
201 E. Fifth Street, 26th Floor
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
937-813-7895
karen.dunlevey@jacksonlewis.com

in MEMORY

Ohio State Senator James E. Carnes passed away peacefully at his home on April 25, 2026. Appointed to the Ohio Senate in 1995, he represented nine eastern Ohio counties. After leaving the Senate in 2004, Carnes served as Deputy

Director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. He was later appointed to the Ohio Liquor Control Commission by Governor John Kasich, reappointed by Governor Mike DeWine, and served until his retirement in 2025.

INDUSTRY ISSUES UPDATE

by David A. Raber, General Counsel

LITIGATION UPDATE: OHIO ASKS U.S. SUPREME COURT TO REVIEW DIRECT-SHIPMENT RULING

Members will recall that in May, a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruled against Ohio in *Block v. Canepa*, holding that Ohio's restriction on direct shipment of wine by out-of-state retailers, along with its cap on the amount of wine an individual may personally transport into the state, violate the dormant Commerce Clause. The ruling broke sharply from decisions in seven other circuits, including the Sixth Circuit, that have upheld similar direct-ship restrictions as a valid exercise of a state's authority under Section 2 of the Twenty-First Amendment. WBWAO intervened in the case below in support of Ohio's three-tier system.

Change in Attorney General

Members should also note that Dave Yost, who filed the petition as Ohio Attorney General, has since resigned; Governor DeWine appointed Andy Wilson, former director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, as Ohio's 52nd Attorney General on May 11, 2026. We do not expect the transition to affect the State's pursuit of the petition, and we will keep members posted on any developments.

Sixth Circuit Stays Its Mandate

On May 20, 2026, the Sixth Circuit granted Ohio's motion to stay issuance of its mandate, giving Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost time to petition the U.S. Supreme Court for review. The stay remains in place while the certiorari petition is pending and, if the U.S. Court grants review, until the case is finally resolved. Absent a timely petition, the stay would have expired ninety days after the panel's judgment and the Sixth Circuit's ruling would have taken immediate effect.

Ohio Files Petition for Certiorari

Ohio has since filed its petition asking the Supreme Court to take up the case. The petition emphasizes the resulting circuit split — the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Circuits have all upheld direct-ship restrictions like Ohio's, leaving the Sixth Circuit as the lone outlier — and argues that the panel's decision misapplies the Supreme Court's public-health-and-safety framework from *Tennessee Wine & Spirits Retailers Assn. v. Thomas*. Ohio also argues the case implicates important questions of state sovereignty under the Twenty-First Amendment, since the ruling leaves Ohio alone among its sister states unable to enforce restrictions that roughly three dozen other states maintain.

Respondents Seek Extension – and Bring in Supreme Court Counsel

Respondents Kenneth Miller and House of Glunz, Inc. have requested, and the Court has granted,

an extension of their deadline to respond to the petition, now due August 10. WBWAO's counsel notes that the extension request was filed by Kannon Shanmugam, an experienced Supreme Court advocate. That choice of counsel indicates respondents are treating the petition seriously and may themselves support Supreme Court review, rather than oppose it.

WBWAO's Approach

For now, WBWAO's strategy remains to monitor the case closely without taking additional action at the certiorari stage. We are watching to see whether the State likewise engages experienced Supreme Court counsel, particularly if respondents end up supporting review rather than opposing it. We will continue to keep members updated as the briefing schedule develops.

Please let us know if we can provide any further information on this matter.



IDENTIFYING & REPORTING SUSPECTED CLAIM FRAUD

The word “fraud” carries a heavy connotation with it, and making a fraud referral to the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation can feel a bit overwhelming.

What should you do if you suspect that a fraudulent claim has been filed against you?

The Bureau of Workers’ Compensation has an entire division devoted to analyzing and investigating fraud concerns. The Special Investigations Department was created in 1994 with the sole purpose of reviewing potential fraud in the workers’ compensation system.

According to the Bureau’s Special Investigations Department Annual Report from 2025, they received

2,164 fraud allegations and ultimately closed 1,395 cases with 56 resulting in convictions for an identified savings of \$91 million dollars.

It is important to understand the activities that are most associated with potential workers’ compensation claim fraud:

- Collecting disability benefits while receiving compensation
- Receiving cash payment for work performed “under the table”
- Claiming to be injured while at work when the injury happened elsewhere
- Exaggeration of disability complaints to extend disability
- Falsifying documents related to a claim application

Employers are often notified of potential fraud either from co-workers who witnessed or heard about the suspected incident or through personal observation, such as seeing a post on social media.

Should you suspect one or more of the above activities you should contact the BWC Fraud unit to report a concern. You can do this either through the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation’s website or by contacting the BWC Fraud department directly at 1.800.644.6292.

For more information, contact our Sedgwick program manager, Dave Deyo at 614-318-5516 or email: david.deyo@sedgwick.com



PAT SIMON FROM
ENCOMPASS
TECHNOLOGIES



CONGRATS TO GOLF WINNERS SCOTT MONAGHAN,
TOM McHUGH, GREG MAURER & BRENT WAGENER



JOHN ANTONUCCI &
BRUCE STEVENSON



CASEY FORBES &
STEVE GIFFORD



MATIJA ZITKO AFTER MAKING AN
EAGLE ON #9 WITH JIM MATESICH



L-R: STEVE MASON, MARTY WILLARD, CURT
MCCAMON, AUSTIN PHILLIPS & JASON EDWARDS

2026 Spring Meeting & Golf Outing

Another great day of golf, outdoor dining and our Spring business meeting!
THANK YOU to all the sponsors who helped make the event possible:

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Greater Industries
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John C. Matesich
Lumpe, Raber & Evans
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OMAC Beverage Advisors
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2026

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WBWAO TEAM:

David Raber
General Counsel

Jacob C. Evans
Counsel for Legislative Affairs

Amber Kaufman
Director of Administration

2026

SEP 16-17 WBWAO Fall Convention
COLUMBUS

OCT 11-14 NBWA Convention & Product Showcase
ORLANDO

NOV 9-12 NBWA Next Generation Conference
SAN DIEGO

2027

FEB 1-4 WSWA Annual Convention
DALLAS

APR 11-14 NBWA Legislative Conference
WASHINGTON DC

OCT 5-8 NBWA Annual Convention
LAS VEGAS

OCT 20 WBWAO Legislative Briefing & Luncheon
COLUMBUS

CALENDAR

WAREHOUSE VISITS



HEIDELBERG COLUMBUS HOSTED A WAREHOUSE TOUR ON JUNE 18 WITH REED POULSON, DOLG COUNSEL SHARON MULL, SUPERINTENDENT JACKIE DEGENOVA AND FRIENDS FROM THE AGENCY AND JOBSOHIO



RACHAEL BAUGHMAN, MIKE TRAMONTE JR AND MIKE TRAMONTE SR TALK WITH OHIO REPRESENTATIVE VERONICA SIMS DURING A TOUR OF TRAMONTE DISTRIBUTING ON APRIL 27



TRAMONTE DISTRIBUTING TEAM MEMBERS WITH REPRESENTATIVE VERONICA SIMS



New Location! New Address!

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