

feature

ABL Welcomes New Affiliate Members

Idaho and Tennessee Groups Join ABL; Bolster Association's Presence in Southeast and Mountain West

"We're only as strong as our members" is a common and true refrain with associations. American Beverage Licensees is proud to announce that it is getting stronger in 2014 with the addition of two new affiliate members.

Welcoming More "Volunteers" to ABL

The Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association (TWSRA) joined ABL in late 2013 as the national association's 33rd state affiliate member, and was quickly followed in early 2014 by the Idaho Licensed Beverage Association as the 34th. Both organizations have long histories representing the needs of beverage retailers in their states.

TWSRA was founded in the 1980s by R.M. "Buster" Hammond, Jr., the second-generation owner of Buster's Liquors & Wines in Memphis. Josh Hammond, Buster's son, is now the third generation owner-operator of Buster's. He has served as TWSRA president for the last four years, continuing the family's presence in statewide, and now national, politics.

TWSRA members are single-store owners and operators as prescribed by state law. They foster a vibrant retail beverage culture in Tennessee, with specialty shops both serving and giving back to their communities.

Off-premise beverage alcohol retailers in Tennessee generate over 7,500 local jobs, paying over \$224 million in



wages each year.

"In Tennessee, we are very happy to have the support of ABL at the national level as we face all the challenges of a family-owned business," said Hammond. "We look forward to getting to know our peers in other states better as we move forward."

ABL's presence in the South remains strong, and TWSRA joins affiliates from its neighboring states of Virginia, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Kentucky.

"Many of our state affiliates have found it helpful to build strong regional relationships," said Bodnovich. "Sharing information and communicating about effective policies and experiences has been beneficial to many licensees and their state associations."

Mountain West Presence Expands with Gem State Licensees

Building on ABL's already strong group of state affiliates from the Mountain West region, the Idaho Licensed Beverage Association (ILBA) joins its neighboring ABL affiliates from Colorado, Montana, Nevada and Wyoming to bolster organized beverage licensee groups in the region.

ILBA, which represents 150 independent bars, taverns, and restaurants, has a long history of representing the hospitality industry in Idaho. Originally founded and registered in 1949, it has currently undergone a membership and grassroots renaissance thanks to the hard work of its current Executive Board.

ILBA leadership has grown the organization substantially since November 2012, as its members now account for about 40 percent of all liquor sales in the state's \$50 million industry.

ILBA's President, Susan Jenkins, is the owner and operator of the Gem Lounge in Emmett, Idaho. A retired school teacher, Jenkins and her husband purchased and restored the 60-year-old bar in 2007. Hospitality is now the

"We in Tennessee are very happy to have the support of ABL at the national level as we face all the challenges of a family-owned business."

**Josh Hammond
President, TWSRA**



LEFT: Idaho LBA board President Susan Jenkins with her son and fellow licensee, Jefferson Jenkins. RIGHT: ILBA board members, Irma Valdivia of Jalapenos and Larry Cupp of Great Basin with a guest at the Idaho LBA 2013 Trade Show.

family business, as their son Jefferson owns Huck-n-Finn's Sports Bistro, also in Emmett.

Becoming active in ILBA and joining ABL were just part of the natural progression of being an engaged and successful business owner, she believes.

"I came from a place where you had to be a member and stay knowledgeable of what is going on around you if you want to be successful," said Jenkins. "You need to become a member of the national organization to do that, and ABL fits that need."

Before her election and since, Jenkins advocated that the association join ABL to build the connections and strong industry ties that she believes are necessary in today's beverage alcohol market.

"We are excited to represent not just two new affiliates, but also to have the perspectives of two new states, and the diversity that provides," said Bodnovich.

Connecting Members Across the Country

In adhering to its mission, ABL focuses first and foremost on federal legislation and issues, but in an era of increasing technology and connectivity, ABL also provides a forum in which its members can connect with those from different states to share information and strategies on issues they share in common.

The ABL Advisory Council, which is comprised on state affiliate executives, stays in contact throughout the year. This allows state association staff leaders to to ask questions, share information, and continue the "business of doing business," whether in an administrative capacity or as they lobby in their legislative sessions.

"The connections we build between ABL members are a valuable benefit to our members," Bodnovich said. "When you join ABL, you will be represented in Washington, DC, but you will also become part of an extended network of perspectives from across the country." |

To learn more about the Idaho Licensed Beverage Association, visit www.IdahoILBA.com.
To learn more about the Tennessee Wine & Spirits Retailers Association, visit www.TWSRA.com.

A Growing Footprint...

With the addition of the Idaho Licensed Beverage Association and the Tennessee Wine & Spirits Retailers Association, ABL now has 34 state affiliates, located in the blue states on the map to the right. Stay tuned to see which state the next ABL Affiliate will represent.

