



The Charleston Regional
Chamber of Commerce

ISSUE: *Modernizing Craft Beverage and Liquor Laws*

BACKGROUND

Nationwide, the craft beverage industry is a multi-billion dollar industry. Beverages such as craft beers, local wines, spirits, meads, ciders and cordials are the expectations of diners and tourists who are looking to enhance their dining experience or take something home as a memento. West Virginia has lagged behind its neighbors in Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and North Carolina in developing this industry, despite the fact that there is still a market within West Virginia and the region for West Virginia made products. Despite some recent reforms concerning growler sales, permitting brunch service on Sundays and allowing certain sampling before purchase, West Virginia's laws and rules remain a hindrance to the craft beverage industry. In order to keep up with the competition in surrounding states and the nation, West Virginia needs to remove barriers and relax restrictions in order to maximize this industry's potential.

RECOMMENDATION

The Charleston Regional Chamber of Commerce supports revisiting and modernizing West Virginia's laws and rules pertaining to alcoholic beverages. During the 2018 Legislative Session, Senate Bill 426 addressed many areas that were positive for brewers, distillers and winemakers, while maintaining an appropriate level of safety and control. The Chamber supports those changes and generally supports the following:

- Removing arbitrary 12% ABV level on craft beers. Having this cap prevents brewers from entering national competitions, and thus eliminates important marketing opportunities and small batch brewing opportunities that have a high profit margin.
- Allowing Sunday and state holiday liquor sales.
- Allowing expanded sampling for beer, wine and liquor. Samples lead to better sales, and ensures the customer is getting a quality product.