



Richard Blau

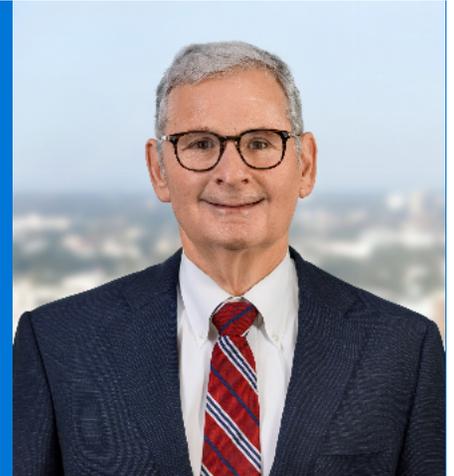
Attorney

Contact

Tampa

P 813.424.3503 | F 813.405.8904 | M 813.220.8125

rblau@spencerfane.com



Overview

Richard Blau represents supplier, wholesaler, and retailer licensees across the U.S. in heavily regulated industries, including alcohol beverages, food, and cannabis. His experience encompasses federal and state trade law compliance; responsible vendor and employee training; trade regulation; administrative proceedings; and litigation and dispute resolution. An industry trailblazer who works with all three tiers of the alcohol beverage industry, he effectively helps clients untangle the complex web of federal, state, and local rules and regulations that govern the production, importation, marketing, sale, and consumption of beer, wine, distilled spirits, and other licensed beverages, including the recent product phenomenon of hemp beverages.

With more than 40 years of experience as a trial attorney focused on alcohol beverage, food, and cannabis regulation, Richard has represented international suppliers and domestic manufacturers, importers and exporters, statewide wholesalers and their trade associations, and retailers across the nation, including national and regional multilocation chain licensees such as restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores, and hotels.

Through a track record of successful litigation outcomes, Richard has set some of the most important industry precedents in alcohol beverage regulation, including imposing constitutional limits on the application of a statutory beer franchise law, and defining “brand extension” under Florida’s Beverage Law. In addition, he represents clients before the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), as well as state alcohol regulatory agencies in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. His experience includes testifying as an expert witness in both judicial and legislative proceedings, as well as working with state and federal lawmakers to draft proposed legislation and administrative rules on behalf of both clients and regulators. Richard’s breath of experience is evidenced by the fact that he is the only attorney in the U.S. to be ranked Band 1, National by *Chambers & Partners* in the Food and Beverage – Alcohol category.

In food law, Richard helps clients with all facets of such a highly regulated and constantly evolving industry, ensuring producers, importers, processors, distributors, and retailers can confidently and efficiently tackle the many labeling, compliance, and liability challenges that arise. His experience includes supporting food and beverage manufacturers through product recalls and market withdrawals, as well as representing food industry producers in compliance

negotiations with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Richard's work in cannabis law centers on federal and Florida law compliance. His experience includes representing applicants seeking to acquire a Medical Marijuana Treatment Center (MMTC) license from the Florida Department of Health's Office of Medical Marijuana Use (OMMU), as well as investors seeking to acquire an MMTC license from existing licensees. Beyond marijuana, Richard consults regularly with hemp industry members regarding licensure, labeling, marketing, and related compliance issues for manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of hemp products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and / or cannabidiol (CBD).

Richard has testified before governmental bodies, including the New York State Assembly, regarding alcohol laws and related issues. Specific notable experience includes counseling legislators of Hawaii on the effects of a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision impacting the direct shipment of wine and testifying before legislative committees of both the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives regarding related issues. A renowned industry thought leader, he regularly addresses industry regulators on 21st Amendment issues as a featured speaker at annual conferences for the National Conference of State Liquor Administrators, National Alcohol Beverage Control Association, and National Liquor Law Enforcement Association.

Education

- Georgetown University Law Center, 1982 (J.D.)
- Brandeis University, 1979 (B.A.)

Bar Admissions

- New York, 2013
- District of Columbia, 1986
- Florida, 1982

Court Admissions

- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Military Appeals
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit
- Florida Supreme Court
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida

Community Involvement

Feeding America Tampa Bay / Feeding Tampa Bay, 2010-present; Chair Emeritus, 2016; Chairman of the Board, 2014-2015; Board of Directors, 2010-2016

Distinctions

- *Chambers and Partners*, Band 1, Food & Beverage Law, 2008-present
- *Martindale-Hubbell*, AV Preeminent, 1996-present
- *Best Lawyers in America*, Food and Beverage Law, 2011-present
- *Florida Super Lawyers*, Food & Drugs; International; Administrative Law, 2006-present

Memberships

- American Bar Association, Committee on Beverage Alcohol Practice, Former Chairman and Current Member
- National Conference of State Liquor Administrators (NCSLA), Industry Member
- National Alcohol Beverage Control Association (NABCA), Associate Member
- National Liquor Law Enforcement Association, Industry Member
- American Bar Association and National Conference of State Liquor Administrators, *Survey of Reported Judicial Decisions Addressing the 21st Amendment and Related Alcohol Laws*, Editor
- American Law Institute, Elected Member
- Academy of Hospitality Industry Attorneys, Elected Member

Presentations and Publications

- "A WORD TO THE WISE: Alcohol Beverage Product Liability and Consumer Class Action Litigation," National Alcohol Beverage Control Association 33rd Annual Legal Symposium, Arlington, Virginia, March 2026
- "FROM STILL TO SHELF: Protecting Your Brand in a Regulated World," Distilled Spirits Council of the United States 2026 Annual Meeting, Lexington, Kentucky, March 2026
- "THE 2025 LEGAL UPDATE: Seas of Change," National Conference of State Liquor Administrators 2025 Annual Meeting, Maui, Hawaii, June 2025

Related Experience

- Assisted seven EU distillers in negotiating joint importation and distribution agreements with U.S.-based wholesale distributors.
- Prepared an administrative regulation and statutory amendment, at the request of the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco, to codify the impact of a judicial decision that he successfully obtained on behalf of a client.
- Represented a national alcohol beverage trade association in hearings convened by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative concerning proposed responses to EU tariffs on wines and distilled spirits.
- Defended a food and beverage distributor and the largest U.S. retail pharmacy chain against class action claims alleged by a California consumer plaintiff that certain snack foods labeled as "natural," which are produced by the distributor and sold by the pharmacy chain throughout the state, violated the California Consumers Legal Remedies Act.
- Defended an American multinational manufacturer and marketer of consumer-branded food products against a misleading food labeling case brought in federal court by a plaintiff seeking class action status.
- Represented a U.S. importer of premium international beers in a case that successfully imposed constitutional limits on the application of a state beer franchise law.
- Represented a national retail convenience store chain in its acquisition of over 400 new locations requiring the contemporaneous transition of over 10,000 licenses from the seller to his client.
- Defended a major U.S.-based subsidiary of a world-renowned Irish brewer in a case which defined "brand extension" under Florida state law.