SpencerFane®

Alcohol Law

Defining Alcohol Beverage Law Where Regulation Meets Reality

Our team provides comprehensive legal support to clients across the alcohol industry, helping companies navigate the regulatory structure that shapes manufacturing, importation, distribution, and retail operations. With a strong understanding of the three-tier system and decades of experience working at its most complex intersections, we help clients solve compliance challenges, respond to operational issues, and plan for sustainable growth.

Overview

Built for the complexities of alcohol beverage law

Through a record of successful litigation and regulatory advocacy, the Spencer Fane Alcohol team has helped establish key industry precedents, including constitutional limits on the application of franchise laws and defining how brand extensions are treated under state beverage statutes. Our team regularly represents clients before the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and state alcohol regulatory agencies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In addition to advocacy before regulators, our lawyers have testified as expert witnesses in judicial and legislative proceedings and have worked directly with lawmakers and regulators to draft and revise statutes, administrative rules, and policy frameworks affecting the alcohol industry. This perspective allows us to advise clients not only on what the law is today, but where it is heading and how to prepare for future change.

We work with businesses of all sizes, from startups introducing their first products to market to mature companies expanding into new regions or evaluating strategic partnerships. Our team understands the complex relationships that govern how alcohol moves from supplier to consumer, and we advise clients on how to operate efficiently within this system while protecting brand integrity and commercial objectives.

Beyond regulatory matters, we provide insight into real estate needs, financing solutions, business transitions, and organizational planning. Our team frequently assists clients exploring new business models involving e-commerce, delivery, digital marketing, third-party service providers, and emerging product categories. We also support clients facing enforcement actions, commercial disputes, and litigation that can have material impacts on operations and long-term strategy.

Our work is grounded in a practical, business focused approach. We collaborate closely with clients to understand how legal requirements interact with market realities, and we deliver solutions that align with each company's goals across the supply chain.

We work in collaboration with leading consultants in the industry.

Click **here** to learn more.

Areas of Focus

Distributors

Industry-specific support for beer, wine, and distilled spirits wholesalers

The Spencer Fane Alcohol team has deep experience working with beer, wine, and distilled spirits wholesalers and understands the regulatory, operational, and commercial challenges that define the distribution tier. We provide guidance on licensing, tied house compliance, and policy reviews that help clients maintain strong internal controls and readiness for state or federal scrutiny.

Many distributors rely on us as ongoing strategic counsel. We assist with succession planning for multi-generational businesses, real estate development for facility expansion or relocation, and evaluation of tax credits and incentives that can support modernization and growth.

Our transactional work covers acquisitions, divestitures, and joint ventures involving independent wholesalers, national beverage companies, and private equity investors. We help clients navigate regulatory hurdles, valuation issues, and brand considerations throughout the deal cycle.

In the event of disputes, our team handles governance issues, post-closing conflicts, contract disputes, and regulatory enforcement matters, including litigation that raises constitutional, statutory, and policy issues with industry-wide implications.

We guide distributor clients through:

- Licensing, permitting, and tied house compliance
- Succession and governance planning
- Real estate and facility strategy
- Tax credit and incentive evaluation
- M&A, joint ventures, and strategic transactions
- Governance, contractual, and regulatory litigation

Retailers

Keeping Retailers Compliant in a Highly Regulated Marketplace.

Retailers operate under detailed state and local regulations that affect licensing, advertising, promotions, staffing, and purchasing decisions. Our team supports retailers with license applications and renewals, ownership changes, responsible service compliance, and reviews of marketing, promotions, delivery models, and digital platforms.

We also advise on strategic growth. This includes new store development, acquisitions or dispositions of single locations or larger portfolios, and real estate matters such as leases, relocations, or build outs. Clients rely on us for guidance on governance, risk management, and operational policies that help maintain compliant and efficient businesses.

When challenges arise, we represent retailers in investigations, administrative hearings, enforcement actions, and commercial disputes. We advise these clients on:

- Licensing and compliance
- Advertising, promotional, and e-commerce reviews

- New store development and strategic planning
- Acquisitions, dispositions, and real estate transactions
- Enforcement response and administrative hearings

Suppliers and Importers

Regulatory Precision for Suppliers and Importers Nationwide.

Our team helps suppliers and importers bring products to market and maintain compliant operations in a competitive, regulated environment. Managing federal and state permitting, product registrations, and label and formula approvals, we advise on trade practice rules for marketing, tastings, digital campaigns, and promotional programs.

We support clients as they expand or evaluate new opportunities. This includes market planning, facility development, succession planning for family-owned businesses, and identification of incentives and tax credits tied to expansion or modernization. For clients exploring acquisitions, joint ventures, or brand transactions, we handle deal structuring, regulatory diligence, and integration planning.

Our team assists clients with:

- Federal and state licensing
- Label and formula approvals
- Trade practice and marketing compliance
- Growth and succession planning
- Real estate and facility development
- M&A support and regulatory diligence
- Distributor dispute resolution