



# MONTHLY MUSINGS

BY PAUL SANTELLE

## 2024 OFF TO A LACKLUSTER START IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR

The New Year got off to a sluggish start. Retailers reported a softer January this year than last, and February business was not looking any better, although the Super Bowl with the help of Taylor Swift should provide a short lift for our retail sector.

On another front, temperatures are rising in the presidential race, and politics will certainly play a supporting role in impacting consumer sentiment through the November election and likely all the way up until the inauguration in January 2025. It looks set to be a déjà vu finale to the 2020 election that will lead to adults drinking more just to cope with the stress.

Regardless of all the above assessments, remember that in both the good and bad times, as well as the most stressful political times, that we, as retailers, are all going through the same thing and need to stay focused on the road directly in front of us. No matter how hard it gets when you are struggling to pay your bills, there is always a light on the horizon that is the beginning of a new day and the opportunity to move closer to better times.

## RECENT LICENSE REFORM LEGISLATION TO GET A CLEAN-UP BILL

Due to the hastiness of the lame-duck legislation related to license reform, our legislature will be revisiting and drafting a clean-up bill to address issues where there is a need for clarification before the ABC can promulgate the necessary regulations to properly enforce the intent of the new legislation. The NJLSA will be working closely with our legislature to ensure that nothing changes in principle that would adversely impact our retail sector. Preliminary discussions with legislative leadership have assured us that the original intent of their recent actions

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**JUNE 24** - Annual Golf Outing, Forsgate Country Club

**OCTOBER 30** - Holiday Trade Show, NJ Convention & Expo Center

remains the same. Stay tuned for more updates on this process.

## APPEAL FOR DTC LAWSUIT ON TRACT FOR SECOND HALF OF 2024

Last August, U.S. District Court judge Julien Xavier Neals denied the plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment and granted the state ABC's cross-motion for summary judgment. The judge then dismissed with prejudice the plaintiffs' commerce clause claim against the state defendants. The NJLSA was an intervenor in this case supporting the state ABC as well as both Allied and Fedway as defendants. We are now gearing up for the appeal process by the plaintiffs, which will once again entail the NJLSA absorbing related legal costs in this most important case. This means we will need help paying those bills in the form of legal fund contributions from our members and industry partners.

As a reminder, this case pertains to out-of-state retailers that want to be able to ship directly to New Jersey consumers while simultaneously circumventing the very same laws and regulations that every New Jersey retail licensee must abide by. Just imagine the tsunami that would run over our entire state if out-of-state retailers got a free pass to do whatever they want to do when shipping alcoholic beverages to our consumers regardless of our laws and regulations.

## NJLSA ANNUAL GOLF OUTING IS TEED UP FOR MONDAY JUNE 24

Please see our ad on the opposite page and go to our website to register for our

14th Annual NJLSA Golf Outing at Forsgate Country Club. This is our most important annual event for raising much needed money for the NJLSA-PAC, which helps fund our legislative affairs budget. It is a day of industry solidarity where retailers, wholesalers, suppliers, and affiliates have fun while raising money for a great cause. If you are lucky, you may even win a raffle prize or a trophy to take home.

## NJLSA MEMBERSHIP & RENEWALS

A big thank you to the new members who have recognized the importance of supporting our legislative and legal efforts by joining the NJLSA. If you are not a member or a member looking to renew your NJLSA membership, go to our website to get connected to your industry. Think of it as an insurance premium to protect the value of your license, which includes your membership with the American Beverage Licensees Association. [www.NJLSA.com](http://www.NJLSA.com). ■

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