



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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ACSA is grateful to its many volunteers who offer their time, talent and resources to advance the craft spirits industry. We are also thankful to the many committee members not listed on these pages who regularly provided thought leadership to address the concerns of small producers of craft spirits throughout the U.S.

The Year in Review

Spirited Purpose

The American Craft Spirits Association presents its 2021 Annual Report. According to the latest Craft Spirits Data Project, there are now 2,290 American craft distilleries and ACSA remains steadfast in its mission to elevate and advocate for the community of craft spirits producers. As the industry continues to grow, we are thrilled that ACSA has strengthened with a 104% increase in membership and sponsorship between 2020 and 2021.

Over the past year, ACSA worked tirelessly to fight for craft distillers in the halls of Congress and beyond, most notably in rallying support for the historic permanent federal excise tax (FET) relief, which prevented a 400% tax hike for distillers in 2021. ACSA further advocated for parity in direct to consumer (DtC) shipping and trade; played an integral role in the government's decision to withdraw surprise hand sanitizer fees for craft distillers; and strengthened bonds with state distilling guilds across the nation. In addition, we launched the Spirits Training Entrepreneurship Program for Underrepresented Professionals (STEPUP) Foundation, a diversity initiative that aims to foster diversity equity and inclusion in the craft spirits industry.

We also proudly provide a wealth of educational offerings with our in-person and virtual convention, webinars and special programs; showcase the best of the nation's craft spirits in our annual Judging of Craft Spirits and biennial Heartland Whiskey Competition; and we continue to present in-depth insight and intelligence for the entire craft spirits universe via *CRAFT SPIRITS* magazine and craftspiritsmag.com. Finally, we continue to produce the Craft Spirits Data Project in collaboration with our hand-picked partner, Park Street. Now in its sixth year, the Craft Spirits

Data Project is the chief economic data study for craft spirits producers.

We invite you to read the 2021 Annual Report and let us know what you think. Your insight is critical as we move forward as an organization and as an industry.

Who We Are

The American Craft Spirits Association is the only registered national nonprofit trade group representing the U.S. craft spirits industry. Members vote for the 15 democratically elected representatives who make up the Board of Directors, and this Board collectively works to govern the ACSA in a transparent, responsive manner and in accordance with our bylaws.

Member Owned

Membership in ACSA is open to anyone, although Voting Members must be independent licensed distillers with a valid DSP, subscribe to ACSA's Code of Ethics, no more than 50% of the DSP is owned (directly or indirectly) by a producer of distilled spirits whose combined annual production of distilled spirits from all sources exceeds 750,000 proof gallons removed from bond, and annually produce fewer than 750,000 proof gallons removed from bond (the amount on which excise taxes are paid).

In case terms, 750,000 proof gallons is 315,451 9-liter cases (12 750 ml bottles) of 100 proof spirit. A DSP may not be a Voting Member if another producer of distilled spirits whose combined annual production of distilled spirits from all sources exceeds 750,000 proof gallons removed from bond and directly or indirectly holds an ownership interest of greater than 50% of the DSP.



A Major Victory for Craft Distillers



ACSA Toasts to Permanent FET Relief

Following approvals in the U.S. House and Senate, then President Trump signed the Craft Beverage Modernization and Tax Reform Act (CBMTRA) on Dec. 27, 2020, as part of an omnibus and stimulus package, giving the country's 2,200 craft spirits producers much-needed, permanent tax relief and parity with their counterparts in beer and wine, who have enjoyed lower rates for many years. Federal excise tax (FET) reform has been ACSA's top legislative priority, and the president's signing marked a major victory for the distilled spirits industry. In addition to the hardships the industry faces as it crawls back from distillery closures due to COVID, distillers faced a 400% tax hike come Jan. 1 without legislation.

Prior to passage, ACSA, together with other major beverage industry groups, worked tirelessly to rally support for FET relief, which was set to revert back to \$13.50 from \$2.70 for the first 100,000 proof gallons removed from bond annually. CBMTRA had garnered tremendous bipartisan support with endorsement by more than three-fourths of the House and Senate. This permanent extension provides significant, continued relief, and marks the culmination of more than a nine-year push for tax parity.

Since 2011, craft spirits producers across the U.S. have rallied together in an effort to push forward long-term FET relief, and it is clear that this grassroots storytelling effort has worked. Over the past five years, ACSA has facilitated thousands of meetings with members of Congress and their staffers. Even amid a COVID-19 shutdown, ACSA brought 150 craft spirits producers and the entire Board of Directors and past presidents to the Hill virtually to share their stories.

"As our country and industry face a challenging year ahead as we

collectively recover from the direct, devastating impact on our businesses due to COVID-19 shutdowns, we applaud Congress—and in particular, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO)—for working together on both sides of the aisle to support our community of 2,200 small businesses and do what is vitally important to keep our industry afloat," said ACSA CEO Margie A.S. Lehrman after CBMTRA was passed. "This isn't just a victory for our industry, but also the peripheral industries we support, including U.S. agriculture and hospitality. Today, we celebrate a major milestone in the fight for parity with craft beer and wine and thank the key Congressional leadership for their tireless efforts."

"We raise a glass to a monumental, near-decade-long effort and to a triumph for our community of craft distilleries," said Mark Shilling, ACSA past president and chair, government affairs, founder of Shilling/Crafted and partner at Big Thirst Consulting. "Finally, this permanent FET reform eliminates what has become a cycle of uncertainty around temporary or even permanent reform. Our industry has a long road ahead as we crawl back from the impact of COVID-19 on our small businesses, but permanent FET reform is one massive roadblock we no longer need to face."

"As President of ACSA and a craft spirits producer myself during what has arguably been the toughest year in recent history to be a small business owner, I know firsthand the struggles we all face in forecasting our financial futures," said Becky Harris, president, ACSA, and president and chief distiller, Catocin Creek Distilling Co. "This passage is a major, monumental moment and the culmination of nearly a decade of craft spirits advocacy efforts."

ACSA Praises HHS Action to Exempt Craft Distillers from Surprise Sanitizer Fees

After the surprise announcement that craft distillers that produced hand sanitizer in 2020 would have to pay \$14,060, ACSA praised the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for crafting a long-term solution to exclude craft distilleries and other small producers from paying the onerous Food and Drug Administration (FDA) fees.

On the heels of ACSA discussions with HHS Chief of Staff Brian Harrison and senior HHS leadership, together with an intensive outreach campaign to congressional legislators and members of the media, HHS in early January withdrew the FDA's scheduled fees. ACSA will be a key stakeholder as HHS and FDA review future processes. As such, these alarming and sudden payments were no longer due on February 11, 2021.

Craft spirits producers are still required to register with the FDA and follow the agency's guidance for the duration of the period in which they continue to produce and sell sanitizer. But distilleries benefitted from an extensive grace period during which they could wind down their sanitizer-making activities, deplete sanitizer stock, and de-register their facilities.

Throughout the pandemic, ACSA was a valuable resource for

distillers who pivoted to producing hand sanitizer.



DtC Efforts

In the first half of 2021, ACSA unveiled a direct-to-consumer (DtC) shipping campaign and threw its support behind a new bill that would allow the United States Postal Service (USPS) to ship spirits.

Assets for the DtC shipping campaign were unveiled during a state distilling guilds roundtable moderated by ACSA's state guilds committee co-chairs P.T. Wood (Wood's High Mountain Distillery in Salida, Colorado) and Gina Holman (J. Carver Distillery in Waconia, Minnesota) in February. Dan Farber—chair of ACSA's DtC committee and founder and distiller of Osocalis Distillery (Soquel, California)—provided an update on ACSA's efforts to pave the way for DtC shipping and shared details on a collection of resources for guilds and distilleries to advocate for DtC changes, including a postcard to send to legislators, model guidelines necessary for elements of a model DtC bill, talking points and FAQs about DtC.

In May, members of Congress introduced bipartisan legislation that would allow the USPS to ship alcohol—including distilled spirits—directly to consumers in accordance with state laws.

Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA), Congressman Dan Newhouse (R-WA), and 17 original House co-sponsors introduced the United States Postal Service Shipping Equity Act (H.R. 2517). This bipartisan bill—which now has 47 co-sponsors—would end the Prohibition-era ban that prevents USPS from shipping alcoholic beverages to consumers. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced companion legislation in the U.S. Senate, as well, and ACSA endorses the act.

Competition and Trade

In 2021, ACSA joined dozens of associations representing all tiers of the beverage alcohol industry in the launch of the Toasts Not Tariffs Coalition to advocate for the permanent removal of all EU, U.K. and U.S. tariffs on beverage alcohol products in connection to the steel and aluminum and World Trade Organization Boeing/Airbus disputes.

ACSA also submitted comments to the federal government on competition and trade. In late July and early August, ACSA asked American craft spirits producers to take a short survey about the most important issues facing them as it relates to competition in the American economy in order to respond to give comments to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). Market access was, unsurprisingly, the primary issue. In our survey, most producers considered this issue to be of the highest importance (ranking 5 out of 5) in their ability to enter a market. Additional important issues included lack of parity between beer, wine and spirits; common business practices employed by large producers making for an uneven playing field in the wholesale and retail tiers; and federal (TTB) regulation.

And in October, ACSA filed comments with the United States Trade Representative, sharing specific examples of barriers to entry in foreign markets. Chief among those barriers is size of bottles where, for example, the EU has not extended the privilege to spirits exported into their member countries the use of a common standard bottle size or an agreement by export markets to accept the U.S. approved standards of fill. Other barriers identified included inconsistencies in labeling, age statements and use of botanical ingredients.



ACSA Launches STEPUP Foundation

In August, ACSA proudly launched the Spirits Training Entrepreneurship Program for Underrepresented Professionals (STEPUP) Foundation, a diversity initiative that aims to provide underserved and underrepresented individuals with training, encouragement, and opportunities to enter the craft spirits community through a comprehensive year long, immersive internship program. ACSA has long recognized a lack of diversity in the alcoholic beverage industry and has been working behind the scenes for some time now to develop a comprehensive program aimed at increasing talent through facilitation of workplace diversity. STEPUP will engage diverse applicants with an interest in the beverage sector and help those of different races, color, national origins, genders and sexual orientations to acquire the skills and experience they need to succeed in the industry.

Together with a selection committee, the Board of Directors have created an immersive internship program for underrepresented individuals in the alcoholic beverage industry. Margie A.S. Lehrman (CEO, ACSA) currently serves as the organization's president, working together with Secretary Rebecca Harris (Head Distiller and Co-founder, Catocin Creek Distilling Co. and President, ACSA) and Treasurer Julie Kinch (CEO/Founder, JK Leadership Advisors, LLC). They are joined by a seasoned Board of Directors, including Chris Montana, CEO and Head Distiller, Du Nord Social Spirits; Chris Underwood, CEO, Young's Holdings; David Cid, Rum Master, Bacardi; and Ingrid Wetzell, HR Director, Bently Enterprises. These critical liaisons will help identify potential partners, secure financial resources, and develop training materials to ensure the program's success.

The STEPUP internship program will be primarily funded through Cornerstone Partners and other major donors. Diageo North America will serve as the first Cornerstone Partner and has made a \$1.2 million commitment over three years. In addition, the company will also hold a seat at the STEPUP Advisory Board. Donor contributions, of any size, will also be welcome from anyone supporting the mission to open up and embrace diversity in the distilling community. STEPUP has also received significant financial commitments from Young's Holdings, as well as contributions from other leaders in craft distilling, including Leopold Bros. and Smooth Ambler Spirits.

STEPUP Foundation participants will be guided through every facet of operating a distillery, with the added bonus of an immersive internship opportunity with a wholesaler. Interns will experience hands-on training and job exposure to several facets of the alcoholic beverage industry, including distillation production and safety, sales and marketing, business and finance, tasting rooms operations, and distribution. In an effort to remove any financial impediments that may limit applicants, the internship will also include a stipend, travel expenses, and lodging. In its inaugural year, the STEPUP Foundation will run two candidates through the program with the expectation to run another six interns in its second year and ten or more interns in year three and beyond.

"While we recognize we cannot change our industry landscape overnight, we are pleased to be moving in the right direction and are equally inspired by the unwavering support we've seen from the craft community for initiatives like STEPUP," said Lehrman. "Though we've been working behind the scenes for well over a year, we are excited to formally introduce this program in our ongoing effort to spark as much change in our industry as we can."

"We are thrilled to be launching this critically important effort," added Montana. "We acknowledge the real lack of diversity in the alcoholic beverage space and

hope to provide all of those interested in the industry, regardless of background, with thorough training and real-life experience."

Nicole Austin, General Manager & Distiller of Cascade Hollow Distilling Co., who will serve on the Advisory Board on behalf of Diageo and their Cornerstone Partnership, added, "I look forward to serving on the board of STEPUP and working to continue the important mission of increasing diversity in the alcoholic beverage industry. The community and leadership I found in the American Craft Spirits Association has enriched both my life and career, and I am thrilled Diageo is supporting ACSA as they provide opportunity, training, and experience to all who are interested in this space."

Chris Underwood, CEO of Young's Holdings, whose company has also provided a significant financial commitment to fund STEPUP's launch, added, "The Board is excited to be working to advance STEPUP's mission to change the face of the industry by creating this unprecedented program. We are proud to put real action around the words of diversity and inclusion."

The STEPUP Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity with donors able to deduct contributions. To learn more about the foundation or to apply, visit www.stepupinternship.org or email info@stepupinternship.org.



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Hundreds of Distillers Virtually Visit with Members of Congress in Public Policy Conference

Distilling dominated Congressional appointment books in late May as more than 200 craft spirits producers from nearly every U.S. state talked COVID-19 relief, trade tariffs and direct-to-consumer (DtC) shipping with Senators and Representatives on both sides of the aisle. The spirits community gathered for more than 150 virtual meetings during the American Craft Spirits Association (ACSA) and Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) Public Policy Conference on May 25-26.

On the COVID-19 relief front, distillers urged support for bills related to COVID-19 relief, like the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, a \$28.6 billion program that included help for craft distillers. Other major objectives on spirits producers' agenda included tariffs and the USPS Shipping Equity Act.

On the first day of the conference, about a dozen officials from the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) generously offered their time to address attending distillers and answer any TTB-related questions. The big theme of the discussion was "streamlining," as the regulatory officials discussed new technologies and protocols that will enhance efficiency of processes related to label approvals, permitting and filing and resolving claims.

Susan Harwood Grant

ACSA has committed to focus on distillery fire safety through the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Susan Harwood Grant Training Program. The purpose of the grant program is to equip non-profit organizations to provide training and education programs for employers and workers on the recognition, avoidance and prevention of safety and health hazards in their workplaces, and to inform workers of their rights and employers of their responsibilities under the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act. Through this program, ACSA, in partnership with Industrial Safety & Training Services (ISTS) will develop training for distillery employers and workers, covering fire prevention and protection topics specific to distilling at a craft scale.

Craft Spirits Classroom: Quenching Your Thirst for Knowledge

In collaboration with the Education and Safety Committees, ACSA continued to build upon its foundation of educational programming by hosting 23 (and counting) webinars in 2021. Topics ranged from technical and production topics to Facebook marketing for craft distillers. Some of this year's most popular webinars included.

How to Stay Out of Trouble When it Comes to Dealing with Waste Water: Mike LoCascio, Soluble Organic Solutions

Distilling With Heirloom Corn: Lisa Wicker, Widow Jane Distillery; Gary Hinegardner, Wood Hat Spirits; Alan Bishop, Spirits of French Lick

Fermentation Techniques: Kevin Kawa, AB Biotek

8th Annual Judging of Craft Spirits

In August, ACSA announced the medalists from its 8th Annual Judging of Craft Spirits, who were honored during a livestream awards ceremony. Medalists were hand-selected from among a pool just shy of 550 entrants.

During the event, ACSA proudly bestowed the evening's ultimate honor, the Best of Show award, to Milam & Greene Whiskey Distillery in Blanco, Texas, for its Port Finished Rye. Dan Garrison from Garrison Brothers Distillery served as the evening's emcee. The stream also featured welcome remarks from Margie A.S. Lehrman and Maggie Campbell. Entries were submitted from 42 states across the country in seven main categories: whiskey, gin, rum, vodka & grain spirits, brandy, distilled specialty spirits, and ready to drink (RTD). In addition to a Best of Show and the Best in Class distinctions, the judging panel awarded 12 gold, 228 silver, and 242 bronze medals.

The 2021 Best in Class distinctions, the highest honor in each of the seven judging categories, were awarded to a mix of both established, award-winning distilleries and younger newcomers. These winning distilleries will be presented with hand-carved barrel heads courtesy of Thousand Oaks Barrel Co, and all medal recipients will receive custom medals generously provided by Apholos.

Best in Class honorees in each category Included: whiskey: Port Finished Rye, Milam & Greene Whiskey Distillery; gin: 28 Mile Gin, 28 Mile Distilling Co. (IL); rum: Navy Strength Rum, Star Union Spirits (IL); vodka & grain spirits: San Luis Valley Potato Vodka, Wood's High Mountain Distillery (CO); brandy: Pear Brandy XO Edition, Peach Street Distillers (CO); distilled specialty spirits: Carlino Bro's Bootleggers Edition Barrel Finish, 3 Hundred Days Distilling (CO); RTD: Copperwing House Calls Wilderness Downtown, Copperwing Distillery (MN).

ACSA would like to thank its competition sponsors, which include Glencairn, Heinz-Glas, and Top Shelf Logistics; host facility Cardinal Spirits in Bloomington, Indiana; and our panel of 29 judges.

The complete list of medalists is available on the ACSA website.



Bar Convent Brooklyn

After COVID-19 forced the cancellation of last year's Bar Convent Brooklyn, the U.S. version of Europe's biggest trade fair for the bar industry returned in August to the Brooklyn Expo Center. ACSA once again sponsored a pavilion featuring member distilleries from across the country. Participating distilleries this year included Backwards Distilling Co. (Casper, Wyoming), Distillery 291 (Colorado Springs, Colorado), Martin Ryan Distilling Co. (Portland, Oregon), New York Distilling Co. (Brooklyn, New York), Round Turn Distilling (Biddeford, Maine), Wiggly Bridge Distillery (York, Maine) and Wigle Whiskey (Pittsburgh).



Guild Outreach: Stronger Together

ACSA strives to be a source of information and a national conduit for state distilling guilds. Currently, ACSA is helping state guilds with efforts to facilitate distribution of spirits directly to the consumer (DtC) through legislation or regulatory relief that provides parity with other alcohol categories. ACSA offers in-kind memberships for all formalized state guilds with an executive director and complimentary registration to ACSA's annual conventions. ACSA also engages, upon request, with state guilds to fight unique challenges. Most recently, ACSA provided direct feedback on why New York City's proposed fire code with a separate chapter devoted to distilleries, was particularly burdensome, onerous, and overly prescriptive. ACSA used its own fire safety expert to provide potential solutions to ensure safety of life and limb. In addition, ACSA sends out a quarterly newsletter to all guild leadership on important facing issues, and our CEO, Margie A.S. Lehrman, regularly attends state guild meetings upon request.



Craft Spirits Packaging Awards

In late 2020, ACSA and *CRAFT SPIRITS* magazine launched the Craft Spirits Packaging Awards. Sponsored by the Glass Packaging Institute, the competition celebrates the best in craft spirits labels and packaging. Its president, Scott DeFife, presented Best of Show to the makers of Brooklyn Gin. Gold medals were awarded in the following categories:

portfolio, The Family Jones, Denver; gin: Brooklyn Gin, Brooklyn, New York; rum: Esencia Barrel Aged Spiced Rum, Burl & Sprig, Muskegon, Michigan; RTD: Gin & Tonic, Social Hour Cocktails, Brooklyn, New York; specialty spirits: Roy's Demon Barley Shochu, American Shochu Co., Frederick, Maryland; vodka: Banyan Reserve Vodka, St. Petersburg Distillery, St. Petersburg, Florida; and whiskey: Organic Red Rider Rye Whiskey, Rockfilter Distillery, Spring Grove, Minnesota. All of the medalists were featured in the January 2021 issue of *CRAFT SPIRITS* magazine. Medalists from the second annual competition will be announced at ACSA's 8th Annual Distillers Convention & Vendor Trade Show in Louisville, Kentucky, and will be featured in the January 2022 edition of the magazine.

— 2021 — HEARTLAND Whiskey COMPETITION

Heartland Whiskey Competition

In September, ACSA announced the medalists of the 2021 Heartland Whiskey Competition, which was open to craft whiskeys from all 50 states that incorporate corn in their mash bill. In this third, biennial blind judging event, whiskeys from 17 "Heartland" states also competed for Best in State, and all entries competed for Best of Show and in their select whiskey sub-categories.

The competition, which was generously sponsored by state corn marketing associations, took place in late July in Louisville, Kentucky. ACSA facilitated the judging process and its former board president—Chris Montana, owner of Minneapolis-based Du Nord Social Spirits served as the judging director. The Bard Distillery, in Graham, Kentucky, assisted with pre-competition logistics. Judges selected from the local Kentucky whiskey industry were chosen for their knowledge and expertise of craft whiskey.

Best of Show was captured by Weldon Mills Distillery from Weldon, North Carolina, for its Rockfish Whiskey, which also earned the top score in the Corn Whiskey category.

A full list of medalists can be found at americancraftspirits.org/programs/special-events.



Insight and Intelligence

ACSA regularly updates and engages with its members about news and topics that affect their DSPs and livelihoods. The bi-monthly *CRAFT SPIRITS* magazine delivers in-depth insight and intelligence for the entire craft spirits universe; *Craft Spirits Weekly* and *The Monthly Mash* provide breaking news and more via email; and *Craft Spirits Live*, *Craft Spirits TV*, and *The Craft Spirits Podcast* offer wisdom from craft spirits producers, thought leaders and more.

While the digital-only magazine continues to be available at no charge for regular subscribers, we recently launched the V.I.P. Lounge to further support our cutting-edge features, business insights and entrepreneurial advice from and for the craft spirits community. For a modest fee, participants can now unlock premium reader experiences, like early access to magazine issues and a set of *CRAFT SPIRITS*-branded Glencairn glasses.

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The
CRAFT SPIRITS
 Podcast



Virtual Board of Directors Retreat

The coronavirus may have precluded travel and in-person meetings, but it in no way altered the dedication and commitment of the ACSA Board of Directors. Besides meeting at least four times in little square boxes (yes, meetings morphed into Zoom calls), the board held a virtual retreat

in September with all board members contributing over the course of two days to review and refine ACSA's strategic plan. It also analyzed finances, as good stewards of ACSA's monies, and evaluated projections moving forward.

Statement of Financial Activity

Three-Year Comparison

	(\$) 2018	(\$) 2019	(\$) 2020	Change from 2018 (\$)	Change from 2018 (%)
REVENUE					
ALL PROGRAMS	754,732	706,401	224,223	(530,509)	-70
MEMBERSHIP	167,750	196,168	171,767	4,017	2
SPONSORSHIP	157,500	120,000	63,100	(94,400)	-60
TOTAL REVENUE	1,079,982	1,022,569	459,090	(620,892)	-57
EXPENSES					
ALL PROGRAMS	443,310	513,865	263,353	(179,957)	-41
OPERATING	349,121	461,025	395,380	46,259	13
TOTAL EXPENSES	792,431	974,890	658,733	(133,698)	-17
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	287,551	47,679	(199,643)	(487,194)	-169

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of our donors and sponsors, whose generous support enables us to move the craft spirits industry forward.

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A Toast to 2022

While the global pandemic made an impact on all businesses and organizations, we are emboldened by the grit and tenacity of craft spirits producers and suppliers. In 2022 and beyond, we are eager to continue our mission of elevating and advocating for the community of craft spirits producers. Here's to a safe, successful and spirited 2022!

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