

U.S. Distilled Spirits Industry Urges U.S. Senate Leadership to Provide Economic Relief To Distillers Amid COVID-19 Crisis

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WASHINGTON — In a letter sent yesterday to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, U.S. spirits supplier trade associations urged Congress to move quickly to provide economic relief to distilleries facing enormous financial hardship due to the impact of COVID-19. The letter was signed by the presidents of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, American Craft Spirits Association, the New York State Distillers Guild, and the Kentucky Distillers' Association. ([Click here to view the letter](#))

In the letter, the association presidents stated, “Across the United States, our member distilleries are doing their part to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the health and safety of their workers and the public. However, because of the necessary measures being undertaken, including the closures of restaurants, bars, and tasting rooms, many distillers will soon need to lay off employees and delay or reduce production. Many may even be forced to close their doors permanently.”

They underscored that these serious developments are having a devastating ripple effect throughout the entire supply chain impacting farmers, glass bottle makers, truck drivers, warehouse workers and countless others connected to the spirits industry.

The association heads urged Congress to include four critical components to aid distillers as part of any economic relief package including:

- **Provide federal excise tax relief**
- **Ensure robust no- and low-interest loan assistance**
- **Seek the suspension of tariffs on distilled spirits**
- **Create an Industry Stabilization Fund**

“As Congress moves swiftly to provide economic relief to affected businesses, we urge you to remember the important role of distilleries in your home states and across the country and their inextricable link to the hospitality, restaurant, tourism, and retail industries,” they said.

Distillers weigh in on current hardships and urgent need for financial support:

“The craft distillers represented by the New York State Distillers Guild are already incredibly hard-hit by COVID-19 mitigation efforts in the Empire State – necessary though they may be. Distilleries like ours may be unable to continue to operate after the pandemic if we don’t get federal support, which will hurt our employees, suppliers, farmers, and the communities we love and support, and who support us.” – Louise Newsome, Co-Owner, Cooper’s Daughter Spirits at Olde York Farm, Claverack, NY

“As a small, independent distillery owner in Minnesota, the devastating impact of COVID-19 on my business is very, very real, and without federal support, our survival is in jeopardy. We have already closed our cocktail room to the public, and laid off more than half of our staff. With no end in sight we will almost certainly be forced to further reduce our workforce and potentially halt our production. These actions have been painful, but the long term looks far more ominous. On behalf of our community of more than 2,000 independent craft distilleries across the country, I am certain that without significant, immediate intervention, and a long-term commitment to assistance, we will face a devastating future.” – Chris Montana, Owner and Head Distiller, DuNord Craft Spirits in Minneapolis, MN

“As the birthplace of Bourbon, Kentucky has more than 20,000 people who owe their jobs to our signature industry and we are all feeling the impact of this unprecedented economic crisis. Our tourism centers and hospitality areas are shut down, leaving many of our smaller craft distillers without key revenue to keep their doors open. The unknown extent of these existing closures, and possible future closures, is creating tremendous anxiety in the distilling community. The closure of restaurants and bars, closure of ABC facilities in certain states, and ongoing taxes and tariffs add even more strain to many distillers. We appreciate the support we have received thus far from the Kentucky delegation in D.C. and join our other distilling partners in asking that our leadership continue to step-up in these unprecedented times and find direct ways to help ease the burden and keep our homegrown, historic industry afloat.” – Jessica Pendergrass, General Council of Heaven Hill and Chairwoman of the Kentucky Distillers’ Association