



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control

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Circular Letter

15-03

To: Manufacturers and Wholesalers of Alcoholic Beverages

Subject: Advertising using Social Media

Purpose: To provide guidance to Manufacturers and Wholesalers of Alcoholic Beverages in utilizing social media to advertise alcoholic beverages and events at a retailer's establishment.

Background: There is an ever increasing reliance on social media as a means of communication for businesses to promote their products and services. Advertising of alcoholic beverages by licensees is constrained by Board Regulations. Additionally, the advertisement of retailer activity by manufacturers and wholesalers of alcoholic beverages is further restricted by the tied house statute (4.1-216).

Held: Manufacturers and wholesalers of alcoholic beverages are responsible for the content of their own social media postings and messages. A licensee may promote its own business and products in a lawful manner.

Manufacturers and wholesalers may post information listing at which retail establishments their products are available for purchase, provided the information is limited to: (1) the retailer's name, address, telephone number, website address and (2) all retailers that carry the products are included in the listing.

Manufacturers and wholesalers may post information concerning upcoming events to be held at a retail establishment so long as (1) the event involves the products they manufacture or distribute, (2) the manufacturer or wholesaler is authorized by Board regulation or statute to be present and participating in the event (i.e. tasting event), (3) the manufacturer or wholesaler intends to participate in the event and (4) any information posted on a social media site is limited to the name, address, telephone and website address of the retail licensee at which the event is to be held.

Questions regarding this topic should be addressed to your Compliance Senior Special Agent or compliance@abc.virginia.gov

Travis G. Hill
Chief Operating Officer/Secretary to the Board.