

## VBA Legislative Update – Week 4 January 31, 2026

### → Senate to Vote on Governor’s Supreme Court Nominees

In early January, Governor Scott nominated two former federal prosecutors to fill two vacancies on the Vermont Supreme Court: Michael Drescher and Christina Nolan. After hearings, which were contentious at times, the Senate Judiciary Committee, on a 3-2 vote, declined to recommend **Michael Drescher** for the **Supreme Court vacancy**. The committee voted unanimously to recommend support for **Christina Nolan’s** nomination. Both nominees will now face confirmation votes by the full Vermont Senate on Tuesday morning, February 3.

The decision against Drescher stemmed from scrutiny over his past work representing the Trump Administration in [two controversial immigration-related cases](#). Nolan’s nomination faced less scrutiny despite questions about [her arrest last year](#) for bringing a firearm in a Vermont courthouse.

Drescher, as acting U.S. Attorney for Vermont, represented the Trump Administration in civil litigation related to the high-profile detention of **Mohsen Mahdawi**, a Palestinian student and activist and [Rümeysa Öztürk](#), a graduate student. Both Mahdawi and Öztürk spoke out against the Israeli government’s actions in Gaza. Both were eventually released when Judges ruled that their detentions were illegal.

Judiciary Committee members who voted against Drescher’s nomination, cited his role in defending Trump-era immigration enforcement actions reflecting a concern about his judgment or alignment with community values. Drescher’s supporters responded that as a government lawyer, he had a professional obligation to represent his client (the U.S. government) in ongoing litigation — and the cases were brought by others, not initiated by him.

The full Senate will debate and vote on both nominations on Tuesday morning, February 3. You can tune in live or watch on [YouTube here](#).

### → Update on VBA Issues

**VBA Priority Legislation.** Emma Arian, Jesse Cronin and Daren Orr testified in support of , [H.672 - An act relating to distribution of malt beverages by licensed manufacturers](#), (see also [S.279](#)) last Wednesday morning in the [House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee](#). The testimony was received well by the committee. You can read their testimony here: [Emma](#), [Jesse](#), [Daren](#), [Fact Sheet](#). You can watch the hearing [here](#).

- As a reminder, this bill would allow malt beverage manufacturers to distribute up to 5000 barrels of malt beverage annually to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class establishments.
- The bill will start in the House, the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee, and be folded into an omnibus alcohol bill.

- At this point, we are hearing that [H.672](#), [H.647](#) and [H.655](#) will likely be folded into the omnibus alcohol bill, possibly with some amendments. The fate of [H.832](#), introduced at the request of the Vermont distillers, is less clear. Next week, I will provide an easy-to-read chart that includes the provisions in each of these bills so they are easier to keep track of.
- The distributors remain *generally* favorable but may be looking to limit the number of barrels or the size of manufacturers that are authorized to self-distribute.
- We expect that the Vermont Wholesale Beverage Association will be invited to testify the week of February 9<sup>th</sup>. At this point, the committee is not scheduled to return to alcohol issues next week.
- **We have seen many VBA members contact their legislators. THANK YOU! It really matters. For those that have not yet reached out, PLEASE contact your local House members to ask them to support H.672. See the Action Alert that Emma sent last week for details.**

**Updates to the Bottle Bill.** As we have previously reported, the House Environment committee is again considering a bill that would make some major changes to the bottle redemption system.

[The bill](#) proposes numerous changes to Vermont’s beverage container redemption system. Most notably, it restructures the redemption system by requiring **beverage container manufacturers** and distributors to participate in a newly formed producer responsibility organization (PRO). The PRO would be responsible for creating and implementing a stewardship plan that would manage the beverage container redemption system going forward. The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) would oversee the organization and verify stewardship plan adherence.

**Matt Chapman**, Director of the Waste Management Division at the Department of Environmental Conservation **will be joining the GAC meeting on February 13 to explain the responsibilities of manufacturers in an EPR for beverage container program and to answer your questions.**

→ **Headlines of Note**

- [Capitol Recap: Gov. Phil Scott pitches a \(mostly\) deregulatory plan for health care](#)
- [Windsor Sheriff Paid Women to Watch Sex Acts, Charges Allege](#)
- [Scott’s Proposal to Ease Wetlands Protections Hits a Muddy Patch](#)
- [Gov. Scott Says ‘Enough’ After Federal Agents Kill Minneapolis Man](#)
- [A ‘top priority in this building’: Senate health committee seeks to broaden access to primary care](#)
- [‘Disaster response’: The extraordinary efforts to prevent homeless Vermonters from freezing to death](#)
- [Vermont government is failing to reduce its energy use to meet its reduction targets, state auditor finds](#)
- [Vermont population declines again](#)

→ **VBA Bill Report.** Please keep in mind that bills introduced in 2025 are still technically alive and can be taken up for consideration. As bills begin to move, the report format will be updated to indicate bills that are moving.

Bill	Sponsors	Description	Status
<a href="#">H 637</a>	Ian Goodnow; Rep. Martin LaLonde	An Act Relating To Operating A Vehicle Under The Influence Of Alcohol Or Other Substances  This bill proposes to make several changes to the laws concerning operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or other substances.	Committees: House Judiciary  Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Judiciary (01/09/26)
<a href="#">H 647</a>	Rep. Lucy Boyden	An Act Relating To Vinous Beverage Manufacturers And Fourth-class Licenses  This bill proposes to allow the holder of a fourth-class license to serve customers larger total volumes of alcoholic beverages at a tasting room or retail shop operated by the licensee. This bill also proposes to allow manufacturers of vinous beverages to operate not more than two first-class licensed establishments that are located at the licensed manufacturing facility or on property that is owned by the licensee and contiguous with the parcel of land on which the licensed manufacturing facility...	Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs  Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/13/26)
<a href="#">H 655</a>	Rep. Lucy Boyden; Rep. Matthew Birong	An Act Relating To Alcoholic Beverages And The Board Of Liquor And Lottery  This bill proposes to amend various provisions of Title 7 to change the term length for members of the Board of Liquor and Lottery from three years to four years, eliminate the specific limitation on the hours of sale for licensees who sell alcoholic beverages for off-premises consumption pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 230, state that special events permits are subject to approval by the local control commissioners in conformance with the definition of "special event permit" in Title 7, eliminate language...	Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs  Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/13/26)
<a href="#">H 672</a>	Rep. Lucy Boyden	An Act Relating To Distribution Of Malt Beverages By Licensed Manufacturers  This bill proposes to authorize licensed malt beverage manufacturers to distribute malt beverages directly to the holders of first- or second-class licenses. This bill also proposes to limit the total amount of malt	Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs  Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Government

		beverages that a licensed manufacturer may distribute directly to licensees on an annual basis.	Operations and Military Affairs (01/14/26)
<a href="#">H 832</a>	Rep. Lucy Boyden	<p>An Act Relating To Fourth-class Licenses And Retail Alcoholic Beverage Tasting Permits</p> <p>This bill proposes to authorize licensed alcoholic beverage manufacturers, at not more than 10 fourth-class license locations, to sell alcoholic beverages produced by other manufacturers. This bill also proposes to amend the application requirements for retail alcoholic beverage tasting permits to allow a licensee to submit the application and fee at least one day before the proposed date of the tasting event.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/29/26)</p>
<a href="#">S 236</a>	Sen. Alison Clarkson; Sen. Richard Westman	<p>An Act Relating To Vinous Beverage Manufacturers And Fourth-class Licenses</p> <p>This bill proposes to allow the holder of a fourth-class license to serve customers larger total volumes of alcoholic beverages at a tasting room or retail shop operated by the licensee. This bill also proposes to allow manufacturers of vinous beverages to operate not more than two first-class licensed establishments that are located at the licensed manufacturing facility or on property that is owned by the licensee and contiguous with the parcel of land on which the licensed manufacturing facility...</p>	<p>Committees: Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read 1st time &amp; referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (01/09/26)</p>
<a href="#">S 279</a>	Sen. Keshia Ram Hinsdale; Sen. David Weeks; Sen. Patrick Brennan; Sen. Richard Westman	<p>An Act Relating To Caterer's Licenses And The Distribution Of Malt Beverages By Licensed Manufacturers</p> <p>This bill proposes to authorize licensed malt beverage manufacturers to distribute malt beverages directly to the holders of first- or second-class licenses. This bill also proposes to limit the total amount of malt beverages that a licensed manufacturer may distribute directly to licensees on an annual basis. This bill also proposes to amend the definition of caterer's license to</p>	<p>Committees: Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read 1st time &amp; referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (01/21/26)</p>

		repeal the restriction on serving alcoholic beverages at first- or first- and third-class licensed locations.	
--	--	---	--