

Advocacy

BA Guild Leader Hill Climb

Industry defense is a key focus of the Brewers Association (BA). Each year, the BA organizes a Hill Climb, where guild leaders, brewers, and allied trades are invited to attend pre-arranged meetings with their states' elected officials in Washington, DC.

The importance of establishing relationships with Congressional representatives and their staff cannot be underestimated. Brewers guilds have a collective voice which should be heard on national issues of craft brewing importance.

Guild presence in Washington D.C. is also essential for helping advance the interests of small and independent breweries—the focus is to educate legislators on the economic, social, and cultural contributions that small breweries provide to their communities.

Outreach to Legislators

- **State legislature Hill Climb:** Annual visits to elected officials in their state capitol offices to educate them on the contributions of the small brewing industry and advocate for small brewer interests.
- **Grassroots Support:** Consumer engagement with legislators through email/calling campaigns can be effective when promoting or opposing specific legislative proposals.
- **Attend legislative committee hearings:** Brewery owners telling their stories and testifying on bills of interest can make a massive difference in the outcome of a legislative proposal.
- **Legislative tastings:** Legislative receptions held at the state Capitol are a great way to meet with a brewery's home district legislators and staff, offering a place to talk in a more candid, personal fashion.
- **Legislator tours at breweries:** Building relationships and personal connections with your elected officials is arguably the most important government relations function your guild can perform as a member of the craft brewing community.
Resource: [Connect with Elected Officials](#)
- **Fundraising:** Assisting members with fundraisers for elected officials.

Hiring a Lobbyist

There's a wide cost range for a lobbyist - some guilds pay \$5,000 a month, while some pay \$5,000 a year—depending on what issues arise and the amount of required action. It's an expensive but important option.

Here are the comments of one state guild leader about the lobbyist on retainer for the guild:



“We have a lot of alcohol beverage legislation every year—about five to 10 different bills on average. Our lobbyist and his firm identify each of those bills as they are introduced and track them through the eight-month annual session. Each time any one of those bills is amended, the firm identifies the amendments and we analyze together for threat analysis. The process of identifying and tracking bills alone is a valuable service.

More importantly, our lobbyist is at the Capitol virtually every day (he has seven other clients in addition to us). He is our eyes and ears in the hallways and gleans a huge amount of “intel” talking with legislators, policymakers, staffers and other lobbyists. All of the state legislators know him on a first name basis and know that he represents the craft brewing industry.

As much time as I spend at the Capitol working with legislators and staffers myself—there is no way we could accomplish what we do without a lobbyist. There are many, many stories of where having a lobbyist has paid off. In essence, the craft brewing industry in our state would look very different if a lobbyist was not part of our effort.”

This is what another state guild President recommends when looking for a lobbyist:

“I can tell you that it has made an incredible difference having somebody who is looking out for our interests at the Capitol, as well as giving us some much-needed guidance in our first few years of being more actively involved legislatively. We feel there has been a huge advantage being able to rely on someone who’s office (with taproom, by the way) is two blocks from the Capitol building!

If I can offer one piece of advice, look for a lobbyist who is a beer geek...one who shares your passion for craft beer! Ours was a big fan before we started working with him, and I have to assume that there are others just like him in other states.”

This guild executive director was a former legislative official and caucus attorney. He chimes in with these final thoughts on the importance of lobbyists:

“I know that lobbyists are seen by many as sleazy glad handlers with big expense accounts and few scruples. In my experience, that is not the case at the state level. The lobbyists I saw in the halls of the State House were hard-working, honest people, building and maintaining relationships with legislators. Get a good lobbyist, a professional with established relationships.

Caveat: Make sure you have a specific understanding up front regarding fees and billing. If you have a \$10,000 lobbying budget, you might be surprised to receive a \$30,000 bill after session wraps.

Tip: If your lobbyist lobbies for several clients, that could be good news for you. Much of the travel time and sit-around time (there’s lots of that!) would typically be split among the clients but be sure to negotiate on this point up front.”



Economic Impact of Small Brewers

An economic impact study is one of many data points that may be helpful in telling your story, along with production data, employment data, and other data related to craft brewing and its economic effects. Guilds can use economic impact studies and economic data whenever they are up against tax hikes and legislative bills that affect craft breweries, or more broadly as part of telling the story of the craft brewing industry to legislators and the media. As a resource, the Brewers Association produces data on the impact of the national craft beer industry on individual states. These state numbers are based on industry-leading input-output software IMPLAN. You can see the compiled economic impact data for each state and learn more about the Brewers Association annual data [here](#).

For many states, the Brewers Association numbers will be sufficient to demonstrate to elected officials the importance of craft brewing businesses in the state. In certain cases, guilds may want to partner with a state university or other organization to produce their own report. Funding for a stand-alone report can come from state agencies such as economic development boards or legislative committees. Advantages of a stand-alone state report might be highlighting unique aspects of a state economy, or the ties that craft brewing has to a particular industry of interest (tourism or agriculture for example). More about your state's economic impact can be found [here](#), and the Brewers Association is happy to be a resource as you examine how to best tell your economic story.

National Guild Meetings

The Brewers Association affords guilds several opportunities to meet and network with colleagues and BA staff and leadership.

At the annual Craft Brewers Conference (CBC), the BA provides several guild-focused educational sessions, open forum discussions, and space for individual state guilds to meet during the conference. If your guild has a strong contingent of CBC participants, contact the BA to arrange for a space to gather as a state.

The BA has also offered Guilds Leadership Summits biannually, giving guild leaders a retreat-type space for networking and professional development. Contact the BA for more information.

Regional Guild Meetings

Regional guild gatherings also occur throughout the country, originally started by leadership within the Midwest guilds.



Anywhere there's an opportunity for multiple states' brewers to descend upon one place for a fest or event, these are great opportunities to also come together with the guild leadership community.

These meetings are great opportunities for guild leaders to connect, network and share best practices with their neighboring state associations. We'd like to see this level of communication occurring more frequently across the nation.

Contact the Brewers Association if we can be of support in gathering your region's guilds together!