



VIEWS&VISIONS

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Crafting New Areas of Economic Growth

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Sayre earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from West Virginia University and his law degree from the University of Arkansas.

Sayre was recognized by his colleagues in West Virginia in 2016 and 2012 as Best Lawyers' Lawyer of the Year for Controversy and Litigation – Tax. He is also is recognized as a leader in matters before the West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration and West Virginia Lottery Commission, including compliance and licensing.

He currently serves as the city attorney for Martinsburg, West Virginia, and is a member of the West Virginia Home Rule Board. He is a former staff attorney for the West Virginia State Tax Department.

The craft beer and brewing industry is big business in America. It has evolved over recent years from a crude setup in your friend's basement with brews that only a mother could love to an industry that continues to expand exponentially. With a passionate following of consumers who appreciate the nuances of beer flavor and character that rival their wine-loving compatriots, the sky is the limit for this booming industry.

According to an economic impact study by Beer Serves America, the beer industry in West Virginia – made up of brewers, importers, distributors and retailers – contributes more than \$940 million annually to the state's economy. State and local governments should find ways to encourage and enhance growth in the industry. (As of the writing of this article, SB 426 – the Alcohol Modernization bill – passed the West Virginia Senate and is pending in the House Judiciary Committee.) Craft breweries are the largest growing manufacturing industry in the state of West Virginia. In 2013, there were 2,650 craft breweries in the United States, and the number continues to grow quickly.

On the average, 1.2 craft breweries open every day across the nation. West Virginia

has 27 craft brewers as well as six cideries and meaderies. Some of my favorite breweries include Berkeley Springs Brewing Company (berkeleyspringsbrewingcompany.com – *I would recommend the Apple Butter Beer*), Mountain State Brewing in Davis (mountainstatebrewing.com – *Who can say no to a Miner's Daughter Stout?*) and Weathered Ground Brewery in Ghent, (weatheredgroundbrewery.com – *Cool Ridge Lager is a good choice here*).

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In 2014, the Craft Brewing Industry contributed \$55.7 billion to the U.S. economy and more than 424,000 jobs, with more than 115,000 being direct jobs. The industry grew to \$67.8 billion and more than 456,000 jobs, with over 120,000 direct jobs in 2016. In West Virginia, the economic impact is \$293 million, ranking the state 44th in the country. Compared to our neighbors, Virginia (18th), Ohio (7th), Maryland (24th), Kentucky (27th) and Pennsylvania (2nd), we have plenty of room to grow.

This increase in the popularity of the craft brewery industry is also present in the craft distiller industry. The number of active craft distillers in the U.S. grew by almost 21 percent last year; as of August 2017, there are 1,589 craft



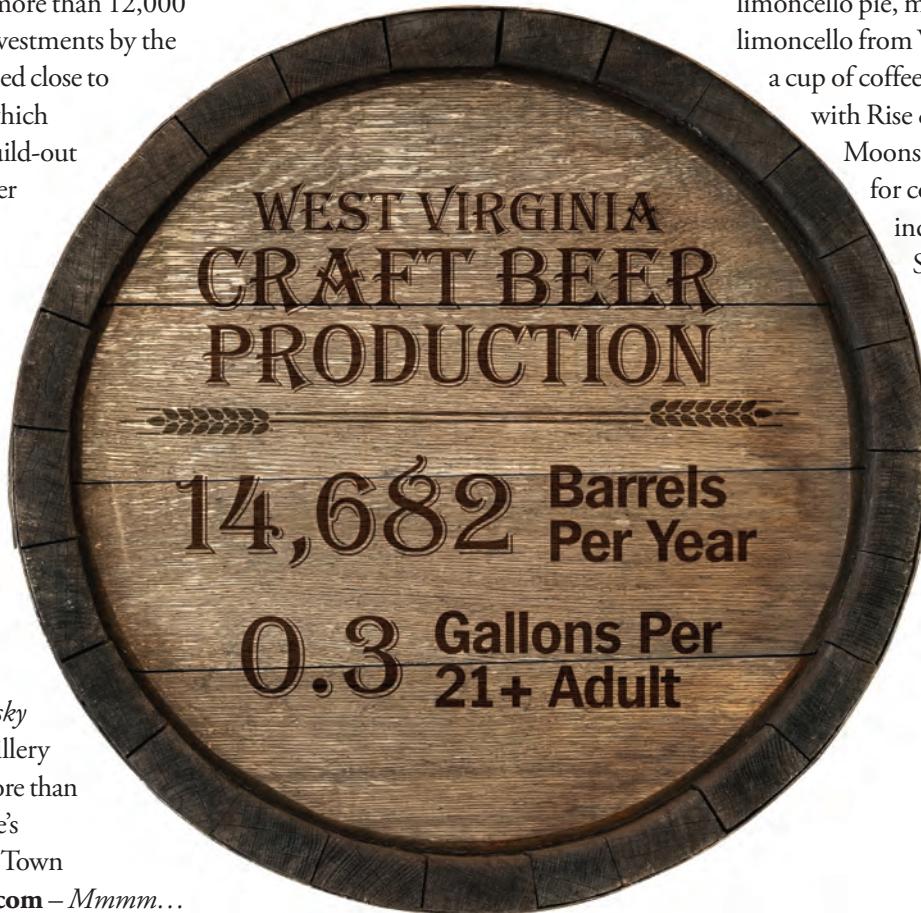
distilleries in the country compared to 1,315 in August 2016. The U.S. craft spirits market reached 4.9 million cases and \$2.4 billion in retail sales in 2015, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 27.4 percent in volume and 27.9 percent in value between 2010 and 2015. In 2016, the industry employed more than 12,000 full-time employees. Investments by the U.S. craft industry reached close to \$300 million in 2015, which primarily covered the build-out of tasting rooms and other visitor experiences, equipment to increase production capacity and associated labor costs, per the American Craft Spirits Association.

West Virginia is blessed with some of the finest craft distilleries in the country. Smooth Ambler Spirits of Lewisburg (smoothambler.com – *Old Scout American Whisky for me*) is the largest distillery in West Virginia with more than 20 employees. Then there's the Bloomery in Charles Town (bloomerysweetshine.com – *Mmmm... Limoncello!*) and Black Draft Distillery in Martinsburg (blackdraftdistillery.com – *First Harvest Moonshine, a classic*). Each offers tours of their facilities and hosts events throughout the year. West Virginia currently has a total of 14 craft distilleries.

One of the interesting trends in the craft brewery/distiller business is the growing number of travelers who are willing to venture out to visit the craft industry. Cities and states across North America are developing and/or promoting beer trails linking breweries and brew pubs together, with printable maps and lots of related content to drive visitation to local communities and small craft brew businesses.

The West Virginia Tourism Office has published its own such map with the West Virginia Beer Trail (gotowv.com/craft-beer-trail). It allows you to custom design an outing to visit the great brewers in the state. Brilliant Stream, a West Virginia-based website that covers the

So, when you take down the fishing pole and meet me at the fishing hole, bring a growler or howler of your favorite West Virginia craft beer. We will not worry if we don't get a bite all day, but we will get to enjoy a fine day. If fishing is not your cup of tea, let's enjoy a slice of tangy lemon-limoncello pie, made with award winning limoncello from West Virginia, served with a cup of coffee that's been sweetened with Rise & Shine Coffee Moonshine. The opportunity for continued growth in this industry in the Mountain State is boundless. Cheers to all who play a role in its success! ▼



craft beer industry, hosts a West Virginia directory and interactive map featuring all West Virginia breweries, cideries, distilleries, wineries and related festivals (brilliantstream.com/west-virginia-barrel-trail/wv-distillery-directory/).

West Virginia lags in its growth in and its support of these industries, especially when compared with the explosive growth in other states and the encouragement these industries are given in other locales. The breweries and distilleries employ hundreds of people and bring thousands of out-of-state tourists to West Virginia to sample their wares, where they also stay the night, eat at local restaurants and enjoy other amenities that the state has to offer.