

## OVER THE BAR

The November 2013 elections, predictably, produced no structural changes in Trenton. Governor Christie was handily reelected and the Democrats held their majorities in both the State Senate and in the General Assembly. Senate President Steve Sweeney was reelected as Senate President and Assemblyman Vincent Prieto(D-Hudson) was elected Speaker of the General Assembly. We, at the NJLBA, have congratulated the winners and sent consolations to the unsuccessful.

The Lame Duck legislative session (from the day after Election Day until the new Legislature was sworn in on January 14, 2014), where bills - good and bad - have been known to make the normally long transition from inactive bill to the Governor's Desk in a matter of days, concluded without any action taken on a host of dangerous pending alcoholic beverage licensing legislation.

Now all eyes are on the 216<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session – a two-year period concluding at noon on January 16, 2016. The list of pending legislation with major impact on our hospitality sector is long indeed. From bills creating wine and beer on-premises licenses for less than \$2000 to bills creating so-called “smart growth” zones which will receive new retail licenses to bills allowing big box wholesale clubs and grocery chains to dominate the retail distribution sector, our industry is still operating under the constant threat of destructive legislation. These bills, and others too numerous to list here, are designed to end our industry as we know it and replace it with new rules and new licenses which, if passed, will destroy family-owned businesses all over New Jersey, will damage New Jersey's consumers and substantially decrease New Jersey's essential hospitality sector generated tax revenues.

The NJLBA is an essential bulwark in the line of defense against destructive legislation. In order to be most effective in protecting our industry, we must be vigilant. What does this mean?

1. **Give some thought to which elected officials you know:** While Senators and Assemblyman are critical, so too are councilmen, mayors, freeholders and county executives. All elected officials at the county and local levels are key influencers in the legislative process. A mayor brings real credibility to a legislator when she demonstrates that a wine and beer licensing bill will hurt local businesses and destabilize downtown. Prepare a list of your key contacts and communicate this information to Diane Weiss and/or myself.
2. **Contribute to the NJLBA PAC.** If you have been a contributor, it is in your self-interest to write a larger check. If you have not made an NJLBA PAC contribution, please take a hard look at the challenges immediately ahead and make the decision to join the effort. Write a check.
3. **Do your best to recruit new NJLBA Members.** United We Stand. The NJLBA will assist you in every way possible to provide the reasons why it makes sense to join the NJLBA – including being at your side while you make the membership pitch.
4. **Answer calls to action when they come.** While the NJLBA's Executive Board is dedicated and effective, it certainly helps our cause when we fill the Statehouse corridors with an overflowing crowd of impacted and angry licensees. Most times, we receive as little as 3 days notice to mobilize against bad bills. We need you to turn out and to fill your car with as many licensees as you can legally fit.

Since 1933, the NJLBA has been a major force on behalf of New Jersey's beleaguered hospitality sector. With your increased effort and determination, we can be an even stronger force to control our own destiny. Get Involved!