

GRAND RAPIDS

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Services

Litigation and Dispute Resolution

Industries

Craft Beverage Manufacturers

Education

J.D., Western Michigan University
Thomas M. Cooley Law School,
2011

B.A., University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee, 2006

Bar Admissions

Michigan

Wisconsin

Court Admissions

U.S. District Court

- Western District of Michigan
- Northern District of Illinois

Christopher J. Gartman

Principal



Chris specializes in advising craft beverage manufacturers. He functions as outside general counsel to breweries, wineries, and distilleries clients from small start-ups to regional and multi-national. Chris leads clients through initial licensing and permitting, aggressive growth phases, trade practice compliance, mergers and acquisitions, negotiating and terminating distribution agreements, intellectual property protection, and all manner of general commercial contracting.

Chris brings a unique blend of legal acumen and industry experience. Before joining Miller Canfield, Chris was assistant head brewer and quality manager at the Five Points Brewing Company in Hackney, London, which followed various production and public facing roles with Milwaukee Brewing Company. Chris provides invaluable insights and guidance to clients navigating an ever-changing and complex regulatory environment. His dual background makes Chris particularly adept at identifying regulatory issues before they become costly problems. He is known for his thorough understanding of the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau as well as alcohol control laws of the various states.

Chris' litigation experience encompasses a broad spectrum of commercial disputes, primarily representing alcohol beverage industry clients in both state and federal courts. Representative matters include civil challenges to local government regulation, shareholder and partnership disputes, intellectual property infringement, construction lien issues, and business torts.

You can follow Chris on X at [@BevCounsel](#).

Christopher J. Gartman

Representative Matters

- Successfully secured a landmark constitutional victory for a group of small, family-owned wineries on Michigan's Old Mission Peninsula, resulting in \$50 million in lost-profits damages being awarded to our clients after an 11-day federal bench trial challenging restrictive local zoning laws, and affirming constitutional protections for entrepreneurs everywhere, especially in the agriculture and craft beverage industries
- Advised alcoholic beverage clients in food safety, distribution, advertising, asset purchasing, employment, stock sales and import and export among U.S., EU, Canadian, Japanese and Russian markets.
- Advised and administered IP protection strategies for craft breweries & fashion and graphic designers, including U.S. and International Trademark and Copyright Applications.
- Advised clients in construction, retail, motorsports and entertainment industries on business and succession planning, real estate conveyances, contracting, creative financing, leasing and government regulation.
- Assisted Viking Cruises USA, LLC in obtaining first-of-their-kind retail liquor licenses in Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Illinois through extensive coordination with state alcohol regulators, government attorneys, fire departments, local health departments and the United States Coast Guard.
- Advised Drink Wisconsinly Beverage Company, LLC on regulatory compliance, private label contract negotiation, and permitting in Wisconsin and Minnesota to facilitate regional distribution of private label spirits and canned cocktails.
- Assisted TOCA Football, Inc., an indoor sports facility operator, in obtaining liquor licenses for five locations—one in Michigan, two in Ohio, one in Minnesota, and one in Missouri—and developing security and service plans to ensure safe and responsible alcohol service operation.
- Represented the Consulate General of Canada in the development of accelerator program for Manitoba-, Alberta-, and Ontario-based breweries, wineries, and distilleries desiring to export beer, mead, cider, wine, non-alcoholic beer, and sprits into various United States jurisdictions.

Honors

Crain's Grand Rapids Business, 2024 Newsmaker of the Year, 2025

Grand Rapids Magazine, Top Lawyers, Food and Beverage Law, 2022, 2024-present

State Bar of Michigan Pro Bono Honor Roll, 2021-present

Professional Activities

WMU/KVCC Sustainable Brewing Advisory Board

Christopher J. Gartman

Michigan Brewers Guild

Illinois Craft Brewers Guild

Wisconsin Brewers Guild

London Brewers Alliance

Brewers Association

Civic, Cultural & Social Activities

Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation, GR8 Sports Fundraising Campaign Committee, 2018-present

Grand Valley State University–Van Andel Global Trade Center, "World Trade Week" Conference Planning Committee, 2019-present

Speeches

"7 Most Common Mistakes - International Sale of Goods" (Moderator), Michigan World Trade Week, Grand Rapids, May 3, 2023

"Are You a Craft Beer Aficionado?" Association of Corporate Counsel Michigan Virtual Educational and Social Event, October 27, 2021

"Product Recall How-To," Wisconsin Brewers Guild Technical Conference and Trade Show, Green Bay, March 27, 2020

Publications

"Detroit firm expands legal fight over Mary Free Bed pediatric hospital designs," Crain's Grand Rapids Business, Media Mention, October 27, 2025

"Christopher Gartman | New Faces in New Places 2024," Crain's Grand Rapids Business, Media Mention, December 9, 2024

"Continuing Tariffs: The Impact on West Michigan Businesses," Grand Valley State University, Co-Author, April 11, 2019

Articles

Michigan Expands Development District Liquor License Availability