

STEPHEN G. AMATO

Member

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www.mcbrayerfirm.com/blogs-hospitality-law-blog

HONORS & AWARDS

- Kentucky Super Lawyers®, 2007-2011, 2017-2025 (Civil Litigation Defense, Administrative Law)
- Top 50 Kentucky Super Lawyers®, 2024-2025
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- The Best Lawyers in America®, 2013-2027, Commercial Litigation; Employment Law - Management; Litigation - Trusts and Estates
- The Best Lawyers in America®, "Lawyer of the Year", 2018 (Litigation - Trusts and Estates)
- The Best Lawyers in America®, "Lawyer of the Year", 2019 (Employment Law - Management)
- The Best Lawyers in America®, "Lawyer of the Year", 2021 (Litigation - Trusts and Estates)
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- A. M. Best Client

Stephen Amato's practice, while primarily focused on the hospitality and alcohol manufacturing industries, is as diverse as the matters clients bring to him. Whether grappling with a regulatory issue, a personnel problem, or facing litigation, clients find a timely and thoughtful response based upon Stephen's more than 30 years of experience, a broad range of well-developed legal skills, and commitment to his client's best interests. In his decades of law practice, Stephen has developed a depth of insight across a wide variety of areas of law and is ready to bring that knowledge to the table to address each specific client's needs.

Stephen is well-known for his expertise in alcoholic beverage and hospitality law. Thanks to his extensive experience working with alcoholic beverage regulators on behalf of producers, distributors, and retailers, McBrayer operates as a comprehensive resource for those with legal needs in alcoholic manufacturing, alcohol retail and wholesale, as well as individuals investing in spirit ventures. Stephen builds genuine, effective relationships with key members and regulators. Each day, Stephen works to protect the interests of the alcoholic beverage industry in Kentucky through his role with the Kentucky Distillers' Association, where he serves as outside counsel, advising the Association on policy and legislative matters with considerable knowledge of applicable laws.

Recommended, 2018

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- Recipient of the **Distinguished Service Award** from Transylvania University, 2017
- AV Rating by Martindale Hubbell
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- Holder of the Writ, Order of the Writ

PRIMARY PRACTICE

Hospitality and Tourism Law

Alcoholic Beverage Regulation

Commercial and Business Litigation

Business Owner Disputes

Insurance Defense

Administrative Law

Employment Law for Employers

Employment Litigation

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

Economic Development and Business Incentives

Estate and Trust Litigation

Human Resources and Policy Training

Mediation Services

Non-Compete Agreements

ADMISSIONS

Kentucky, 1990

U.S. District Court Eastern District of Kentucky, 1990

U.S. District Court Western District of Kentucky, 1990

U.S. Court of Appeals 6th

In addition to his work in the hospitality industry, Stephen has also maintained an active litigation practice. Having tried cases across Kentucky in both state and federal courts, he brings a litigator's perspective to his transactional and administrative law practice on behalf of his clients.

CAPABILITIES, SUCCESSES, AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Assists clients in the alcoholic beverage and hospitality industry with all aspects of their business:
  - Local, state, and federal licensing and permitting
  - Real estate and land-use regulation needs
  - Business-to-business contracts, including spirit supply, storage, bottling agreements, and all vendor agreements
- Oversees the transfer of assets and entities, as well as mergers and acquisitions involving alcoholic beverage businesses and assets, including bulk spirits and brands.
- Managed several clients' creation, formation, construction, and implementation of alcohol manufacturing businesses.
- Efficiently and effectively managed several relicensing efforts for large-scale (60+) retailer acquisitions.
- Helped to craft multiple legislative initiatives that have reshaped the Kentucky Bourbon Industry.
- Serves as outside counsel for the Kentucky Distillers' Association, guiding the Association on policy and legislative matters.

Professional Activities

- Fayette County Bar Foundation, Former President and Board Member
- The Club at Spindletop Hall, Member, Board of Directors
- The Lexington Club, Member, Board of Governors
- Bluegrass Trust for Historic Preservation, Lexington, Kentucky, Former Board President

Circuit, 1993

EDUCATION

J.D., University of Kentucky College of Law, Lexington, Kentucky, 1990

- Notable Achievements: Kentucky Law Journal, Associate Editor, 1989 - 1990

B.A., Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, 1987

- Major: History
- Honors: Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society

- Lexington History Museum, Lexington, Kentucky, Former Chair, Board of Trustees

Professional Activities

National Association of Alcoholic Beverage Licensing Attorneys, Member

Alliance of Alcohol Industry Attorneys and Consultants (AAIAC), Member

National Association of Licensing and Compliance Professionals (NALCP), Member

Fayette County Bar Association, Member

Kentucky Bar Association, Member

Kentucky Bar Foundation, Member, Board of Directors

Kentucky Guild of Brewers, Affiliate Member

Mediation Center of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, Former Board Chair

Inaugural Class, Order of the Writ - a fraternal and charitable organization that embraces the spirit of Kentucky Bourbon education, responsibility, environmental stewardship, history, scholarship and an unwavering commitment to the furtherance of America's only native spirit.

News

Members Stephen Amato, Neal Morris, and Mari-Elise Paul present at inaugural UK/CLE Bourbon Law
October 1, 2026

IN THE MEDIA - Fifty McBrayer Attorneys Recognized by *Best Lawyers® for 2027*
August 20, 2026

IN THE MEDIA - McBrayer Attorneys Share Insights for Long-Term Growth in the Spirits Industry
March 1, 2026

Celebrating Excellence: 40 McBrayer Attorneys Recognized by Super Lawyers
December 16, 2025

McBrayer PLLC Achieves Record-Breaking Recognition in *Best Lawyers in America® 2026*
August 21, 2025

Leading the Way in Legal Excellence: 38 McBrayer Attorneys Honored in 2025 Super Lawyers and Rising Stars Lists
December 17, 2024

New Record Set: 51 McBrayer Attorneys Honored in Best Lawyers 2025
August 15, 2024

McBrayer Earns Record Number Named to Super Lawyers Lists for 2024
January 9, 2024

Another Record! 49 McBrayer Attorneys Named to Best Lawyers® 2024
August 17, 2023

Member Stephen Amato Quoted in *The Lane Report's The Bourbon Flight*
February 13, 2023

25 McBrayer Attorneys Named to Super Lawyers and Rising Stars Lists for 2023
December 29, 2022

A Record Number! Thirty McBrayer Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers® in America* Lists for 2023
August 18, 2022

Members Robert E. Maclin III and Stephen G. Amato to Present at CLLA Southern Region Conference
February 14, 2022

Member Stephen G. Amato to Present at Third Annual James B. Beam Institute Industry Conference
February 14, 2022

22 McBrayer Attorneys Recognized in 2022 Edition of Super Lawyers
December 30, 2021

Members Jaron P. Blandford and Stephen G. Amato Quoted in *The Lane Report*
October 26, 2021

Member Stephen G. Amato Speaks at National Association of Licensing and Compliance Professionals Conference
October 8, 2021

McBrayer Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers® in America* List for 2022
August 19, 2021

Once Again, McBrayer Attorneys Receive Super Lawyers Distinctions for 2021
Super Lawyers, December 10, 2020

McBrayer Members James H. Frazier, III, Stephen Amato, Cindy Effinger, Luke Morgan quoted in The Lane Report
The Lane Report, October 19, 2020

McBrayer Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers® in America* List for 2021
August 20, 2020

Coronavirus Resource for Businesses

We Made the List Again! McBrayer Attorneys Receive Super Lawyers Distinctions for 2020
Super Lawyers, December 2, 2019

McBrayer Well Represented at National Association of Licensing and Compliance Professionals Annual Convention
October 23, 2019

McBrayer Attorneys receive U.S. News Best Lawyers Distinction for 2020
U.S. News – Best Lawyers® in America, September 4, 2019

McBrayer Attorneys receive U.S. News Best Lawyers and Super Lawyers Distinctions for 2019
December 19, 2018

McBrayer attorneys named to U.S. News Best Lawyers including 3 Lawyer of the Year honors
Attorneys from McBrayer law offices in Lexington and Louisville achieved a 2018 listing in U.S. News Best Lawyers in America
August 15, 2017

Seminars & Speaking Engagements

Member Stephen Amato Speaks at Bourbonomics 2026
March 26, 2026

Members Stephen Amato and Neal Morris Attend James B. Beam Institute Industry Conference
March 16, 2026

Bourbonomics: A Celebration of Kentucky's Signature Industry
March 24, 2025

Member Stephen Amato Speaks at 6th Annual James B. Beam Institute Industry Conference
March 17, 2025

Ahead of the Curve: Getting in Front of Workplace Problems - Lexington
A Seminar for Employers
The Mane on Main, 201 East Main Street, 15th Floor, Lexington, Kentucky, March 22, 2023

Ahead of the Curve: Getting in Front of Workplace Problems - Louisville
A Seminar for Employers
500W Training Center, 500 West Jefferson Street, 4th Floor, Louisville, Kentucky, March 21, 2023

WEBINAR - What's New in the Bluegrass: Kentucky Legislative Update 2022
July 12, 2022

Alcoholic Beverage Licensing Compliance Program

Kentucky Bar Association Annual Convention 2017
Owensboro, Kentucky, June 21, 2017

NBI - Brewery and Distillery Law in Kentucky
Louisville, Kentucky, May 15, 2017

Kentucky County Attorneys Association Annual Winter Meeting 2017
Lexington, Kentucky, March 2, 2017

Employment Best Practices - A McBrayer Employment Law Seminar
Perspectives on Wage and Hour and Kentucky Employment Law Update
Lexington, KY, January 26, 2017

Greater Lexington Paralegal Association
Lexington, Kentucky, November 15, 2016

Naltional Association of Licensing and Compliance Professionals National Conference 2016
Patchworks and Pitfalls: Server Training and State Laws and Regulations
New Orleans, LA, October 5, 2016

Winery and Vineyard Law
Lexington, KY, 9:00am - 4:30pm

Overtime in Overdrive
The Expanding NLRA: Recent Holdings and Guidance from the NLRB
Lexington, KY, November 5, 2015

Food Truck 101: The Ins and Outs of the Mobile Food Biz
Thinking of starting a food truck? Get your questions answered at this event.
Lexington, KY, October 21, 2015

Alcohol Beverage Control Laws
2015 KBA Convention
Lexington, KY, June 17, 2015

Bourbonomics
An Inside Look at the Business of Bourbon
Louisville, KY, May 13, 2015

Eat, Drink & Be Successful: Establishing smart partnership in the hospitality biz; Business
Lexington, November 12, 2014

Getting It "Write": A McBrayer Employment Law Seminar, Lexington, KY
September 28, 2014

Annual Kentucky Law Update, Federal Court Updates, November 21, 2013

Annual Kentucky Law Update, Federal Court Updates, October 9, 2013

Annual Kentucky Law Update, Federal Court Updates, September 10, 2013

Romance or Ruin: Musings on the Food Biz "Opening a Bar", Panel Member, Business Lexington, August 22, 2013

Legal Issues for Restaurants, Bars and Hotels - A Critical Update, McBrayer law, February 2013

Employment Policies and Procedures: A Critical Legal Update for Employers, McBrayer law Client Seminar, 2012, 2009

Depositions A-Z, NBI, 2011, 2007

Advanced Trial Tactics, MBI, 2010

Annual Ethics CLE, Fayette County Bar Association, 2007

Articles

SB 11 Brings a Host of Changes to Kentucky Alcohol Law
Business Lexington, June 1, 2016

Alcoholic Beverage Control Laws
The Year That Was Foreshadows the Year That Will Be
Louisville Bar Association, January 1, 2016

Strange Brew: Regulation and the Weird Liquor Laws that Result, FCBA Bar News 2014, Issue 2

Fudging a Five-Star Rating - Can It Hurt?, Business Lexington, May 2014

Strange Brew: Regulation & the Weird Liquor Laws That Result, The Bourbon Review, March 2014

2013's Biggest Court Rulings, Lane Report, February 2014

Foul on the Play: When Bullying in the Workplace is Real, Kentucky Chamber HR Update, February 2014

Changes to Kentucky Alcohol Laws, Business Lexington, June 2013

Bourbon's return to Lexington overcame a bureaucratic tangle, Business Lexington, October 12, 2012

Newsletters

Alcohol Tax Breaks Brewing in Congress
May 2015

What Needs To Be Shared About the "Sharing Economy"
October 2014

When Rave Reviews Become Risky
May 2014

Bourbon's return to Lexington overcame a bureaucratic tangle
January 2013