**Blogpost – May 2015 – Cam Brown**

**WineAmerica 2015 National Grape and Wine Policy Conference**

Last week WineAmerica held the 2015 National Grape and Wine Policy Conference in Washington, DC. The conference consisted of visits to Capitol Hill to meet with Representatives and informational panels. The panel presentations covered major legislative issues related to the United States wine industry with presentations from members of Congress, their staff, industry members, and policy experts.

For a great overview of the conference head to<http://wineamerica.org/news/2015-wine-grape-policy-conference>..

While Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade (TTB) funding, tax or immigration reform are pressing issues for Michigan’s wine industry to track, and be active on, the industry’s priority is addressing back to back colder than normal winters that have caused significant crop damage and death.  Despite the harsh winters, the industry continues to look to the future in part due to support from policies designed specifically for agricultural producers. Whether through crop insurance, Specialty Crop Grants, Strategic Growth Initiatives, or Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Michigan’s wine industry can conduct vital research, alleviate some crop loss, and access financial tools to develop renewable energy projects because of the work that has been done by our Representatives, especially Senator Stabenow’s tireless efforts through the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. The WineAmerica policy conference was a opportunity to make the Michigan voice heard, and thank our representatives for their work to support the wine industry; a sentiment shared by our fellow Midwestern wine regions, and New York, who are facing climate challenges very similar to our own. Through WineAmerica, Michigan wineries interact directly with policy decision makers to insure the continuation of programs, grants, and insurance that help our industry grow grapes and make wine of the highest quality.