

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: The MetroPSA  
From: Tom Butler and Christopher Collora  
RE: Updated Report on September 2019 Media Outreach Activity and Results  
Date: September 30, 2019

## **Media Outreach and Results**

### **Background Info:**

After being turned down by the New York State Liquor Authority for two previous stores in the New York area, the Total Wine liquor store chain used new tactics to apply for a new liquor license for a new location in College Point Queens.



MICHELLE TRONE. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELLE TRONE.

Michelle Trone, daughter of Total Wine Co-owner Democratic Congressman David Trone of Maryland, sent a letter seeking support to open a 30,000 square foot Total Wine big box mega store in the now vacant Toys R Us store in 30-02 Whitestone Expressway, College Point Queens. The letter portrays Michelle Trone, an ivy-league college graduate, as a solo female entrepreneur who wants to fulfill her dream of owning her own business. The letter does not mention that Total Wines is a 3-Billion-dollar per year business with nearly 200 stores in 23 states across the country. Due in large part to that omission and misrepresentation, several elected officials signed a letter of support to encourage the granting of a liquor license.

While Trone portrays herself in media interviews as a young upstart female entrepreneur, Trone's application for the liquor license says that she has been granted a credit line of \$10-million dollars. Most Mom and Pop retail liquor stores do not have access to that level of credit borrowing or that much capital to renovate their stores, let alone the support, brand recognition and resources of a national brand chain. The argument that this is a fair playing field equal with the average Mom and Pop liquor stores in the area just doesn't hold up.

Total Wines has been referred to as the 'Walmart of liquor stores'; that often sells wines at a lower cost than their competitors can afford to. Most experienced liquor store owners fear the unfair competitive and predatory pricing advantage that a mega store like this would have as a disruptive force to the long well-established liquor store industry in the Queens area and beyond.

In previous applications in Stony Brook and Westchester, Total Wines admitted that their business model is expected to draw business from a 50-mile radius.

The MetroPSA, which represents some 2,500 retail liquor stores across the New York area, called in Bultler Associates to use powerful public relations strategies to expose the situation, educate the public and encourage the elected officials to reconsider their support.



**Activity:**

Butler Associates drafted and sent out an announcement press release the week of 9/2/19 which successfully encouraged news story coverage in major New York City area media outlets including [NBC News](#), [Forbes](#), [New York Post](#), [am New York](#), [The Queens Chronicle](#), [Flushing Post](#), [Queens County Politics](#) and [Queens Daily Eagle](#).



Additionally, Butler Associates helped plan and coordinate a media press conference and rally event featuring Assemblyman Ron Kim before the scheduled MetroPSA meeting on Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>. Butler Associates drafted and sent out a media advisory to invite local press to cover the event. Several media outlets turned out to cover that

event including [NY1 News](#), [Pix 11 News](#), [Fox 5 News](#), [ABC 7 news](#), [QNS.com](#), [Forbes](#), [Queens Chronical](#), [Sing Tao Daily](#), [am New York](#), [Labor Press](#), and [Pavement Pieces](#)



At the rally event, the Butler team also shot video of the press conference and interviews with store owners to share with interested media outlets and uploaded them to the [MetroPSA Youtube page](#).

**Press Release 2** was sent out after the rally event included the video links and encouraged reporters who could not attend the event to do a story on the rally.



**Press Release 3** sent out the week of 9/23/19 involved the New York State Supreme Court Ruling upholding the SLA’s decision. The story was picked up and MetroPSA quoted in articles in [The Journal News](#), [The Drinks Business](#), [Decanter Magazine](#), [The New York Post](#), [Forbes](#).

The story was also picked up and referenced in articles in the [Queens Gazette](#), [Shaken News Daily](#), [Syracuse.com](#), Wopular.com, [Politico](#), [Notiulicom](#), [Eater.com](#), [BPR Business and Politics news](#), [City Limits](#) and Global Industry News Report, and [retail untapped](#).



## Results:

As a result of the increased media coverage a large number of elected officials have withdrawn their support for the Total Wines Mega-store and have written letters to the SLA in opposition of granting the company a liquor license. Most notably Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who represents College Point, wrote a letter in opposition to the Total Wines store supporting the efforts of MetroPSA and small business liquor store owners. This has given the story a new dimension and attracted new interest. Articles appeared in the [New York Post](#), [QNS.com](#), and other media outlets about AOC’s involvement.

**NYS Senators and Assemblymembers Status on Total Wine vs. Retailer Support**

Last Name	First Name	Office	District	District Phone	E-mail Address	Position
Addabbo	Joseph	Senator	(D S- 15)	718-738-1111	addabbo@nysenate.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Aubry	Jeff	Assemblyman	(D A- 35)	718-457-3615	AubryJ@nyassembly.gov	Signed TW Support Letter
Barnwell	Brian	Assemblyman	(D A- 30)	718-651-3185	barnwellb@nyassembly.gov	
Braunstein	Edward	Assemblyman	(D A- 26)		braunsteine@nyassembly.gov	Wrote Letter Supporting Retailers
Comrie	Leroy	Senator	(D S- 14)	718-765-6359	comrie@nysenate.gov	
Cook	Vivian	Assemblywoman	(D A- 32)	718-322-3975	CookV@nyassembly.gov	Wrote Letter Supporting Retailers
Cruz	Catalina	Assemblywoman	(D A- 39)	917-397-0474	cruz@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
DenDekker	Michael	Assemblyman	(D A- 34)	718-651-5258	DenDekkerM@nyassembly.gov	Signed TW Support Letter
Gianaris	Mike	Senator	(D S- 12)	718-728-0960	gianaris@nysenate.gov	Wrote Letter Supporting Retailers
Hevesi	Andrew	Assemblyman	(D A- 28)	718-263-5595	HevesiA@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Hyndman	Alicia	Assemblywoman	(D A- 29)	718-723-5412	hyndmana@nyassembly.gov	Signed TW Support Letter
Kim	Ron	Assemblyman	(D A- 40)	718-939-0195	KimR@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Liu	John	Senator	(D S- 11)	718-765-6675	liu@nysenate.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Miller	Michael	Assemblyman	(D A- 38)	718-805-0950	millermg@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Nolan	Catherine	Assemblywoman	(D A- 37)	718-784-3194	nolanc@nyassembly.gov	
Pheffer Amato	Stacey	Assemblywoman	(D A- 23)	718-945-9550	amatos@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Ramos	Jessica	Senator	(D S- 13)	914-984-7054	ramos@nysenate.gov	
Rosenthal	Daniel	Assemblyman	(D A- 27)	718-969-1508	rosenthald@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Rozic	Nily	Assemblywoman	(D A- 25)	718-820-0241	rozicn@nyassembly.gov	Signed TW Support Letter
Sanders	James	Senator	(D S- 10)		sanders@nysenate.gov	
Simotas	Aravella	Assemblywoman	(D A- 36)	718-545-3889	simotasa@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter
Stavisky	Toby Ann	Assemblywoman	(D S- 16)		stavisky@nysenate.gov	Wrote Letter Supporting Retailers
Titus	Michele	Assemblywoman	(D A- 31)	718-327-1845	titusm@nyassembly.gov	Signed TW Support Letter
Vanel	Clyde	Assemblyman	(D A- 33)	718-479-2333	vanelc@nyassembly.gov	
Weprin	David	Assemblyman	(D A- 24)	718-454-3027	wepri@d@nyassembly.gov	RESCINDED TW Support Letter