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**For Immediate Release**

**Van Winkle Bourbon Takes Action against Counterfeiters**  
*Over Half a Million Dollars Invested in past Year*

**FRANKFORT, FRANKLIN COUNTY, KY (Oct. 12, 2017)** – Pappy Van Winkle Bourbon, the bourbon that is so hard to find it has been compared to unicorns, has become so popular it’s often being counterfeited with knock off bottles and illegally re-sold on the secondary markets online such as Craigslist. The Van Winkles, along with partners Buffalo Trace Distillery, have taken action and successfully provided evidence of counterfeiting which resulted in a resident of New York pleading guilty for his sale of two bottles of counterfeit Pappy Van Winkle bourbon, which sold for \$1,500 last year. The defendant will be sentenced in January 2018.

Although this case is the first successful prosecution for counterfeit Van Winkle Bourbon to date, other cases are under investigation. Buffalo Trace Distillery has spent over a half million dollars over the past year alone, to curb online marketplaces potentially selling fake bottles.

With the annual release of the much anticipated Van Winkle bourbons coming up soon, Buffalo Trace would like to take this opportunity to remind consumers to only buy Van Winkle bourbons from licensed retailers.

“Sadly, the Van Winkle bourbons are the latest victim of counterfeiting where innocent consumers are duped,” said Mark Brown, president and chief executive officer, Buffalo Trace Distillery. “Avoid buying any bourbon or whiskey, especially the highly sought after ones, from anyone in the secondary market, which includes online private sellers, or in these social media groups that claim to offer genuine products. The only legal and reputable source you should be buying from is a licensed retailer.”

Scam artists have been operating in a variety of ways, some of which include taking empty Van Winkle bottles and refilling them with a variety of other liquids, sometimes cheaper bourbons, sometimes mixtures of products only known to the deceiver.

Nowadays, the con artists have gotten more sophisticated with the ability to print counterfeit labels on home printers and other technological advances. “It’s disheartening to see this happening and to see innocent consumers being swindled,” said Julian Van Winkle, president, Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery. “We cannot stress enough to be careful, and do not buy your Van Winkle products on the secondary market. The old adage of if seems too good to be true, it probably is, definitely applies here.”

Van Winkle cautions that if you see a bottle that does not have a matching face label with a capsule on top with the proper corresponding color, that’s a sure sign of fraud. Any consumers that run across suspicious looking bottles or may have purchased a bottle from a source other than a liquor store are urged to call their local law enforcement, their state’s Attorney General, <http://www.naag.org/naag/attorneys-general/whos-my-ag.php>, or their state Alcohol and Beverage Control Board, <http://www.ttb.gov/wine/state-ABC.shtml>.

### **About Van Winkle Bourbon**

The Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery has a four generation history. The Van Winkle family’s involvement in the bourbon industry began in the late 1800s with Julian P. “Pappy” Van Winkle, Sr. He was a traveling salesman for the W.L. Weller and Sons wholesale house in Louisville. Pappy and a friend, Alex Farnsley, eventually bought the wholesale house and also partnered with Mr. A. Ph. Stitzel on the purchase of Mr. Stitzel’s distillery. The three of them merged the two companies and became the Stitzel-Weller Distillery.

In May of 1935 at the age of 61, Pappy opened the newly completed Stitzel-Weller Distillery in South Louisville. Its prominent brands were W.L. Weller, Old Fitzgerald, Rebel Yell, and Cabin Still. Pappy had a heavy influence on the operations there until his death at the age of 91. His son, Julian, Jr. took over operations until he was forced by stockholders to sell the distillery in 1972. The rights to all of their brands were sold to Norton Simon, Inc. Later, United Distillers, who eventually ended up with the Stitzel-Weller Distillery, sold off all of the original labels around 1999.

After selling the distillery, Julian Jr. resurrected a pre-Prohibition label, the only one

to which the Van Winkles kept the rights, called Old Rip Van Winkle. He used whiskey stocks from the old distillery to supply his brand. Julian Jr.'s son, Julian, III took over in 1981 when Julian, Jr. passed away. Julian III has continued with the Van Winkle tradition of producing high-quality wheated bourbon. His son, Preston, joined the company in 2001 and the Van Winkles look to continue that tradition for generations to come.

In 2002 the Van Winkles entered into a joint venture with Buffalo Trace Distillery in Franklin County, Frankfort, Ky. All of the Van Winkle's whiskey production now takes place at Buffalo Trace Distillery under the same strict guidelines the family has always followed.

For more information on the Van Winkle family of bourbon please visit

[www.oldripvanwinkle.com](http://www.oldripvanwinkle.com).

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