



FEDERAL POLICY UPDATE

Q3 2016

A slow summer in Washington, D.C. leads to a critical election

With Congress out of session for the majority of July and all of August, it was a slow summer in Washington, D.C. Despite that, some major events occurred that have had an impact on the dialogue and momentum on Capitol Hill.

JULY

The Democratic Party held its presidential convention in Philadelphia in July, and with it came an historic announcement. The party's platform drafting committee included language pertaining to the reclassification of cannabis, saying:

“Because of conflicting laws concerning marijuana, both on the federal and state levels, we encourage the federal government to remove marijuana from its list as a Class 1 Federal Controlled Substance, providing a reasoned pathway for future legalization.”

This is the first time in American history that one of the major political parties has included de-scheduling cannabis entirely, and it shows the continuing momentum for ending prohibition.

Five states (Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts, and Nevada) will vote on legalizing adult-use cannabis this November, but all eyes are on California and its \$2.7 billion market. The Adult Use of Marijuana Act (AUMA) officially qualified for the ballot in July as Proposition 64. AUMA legalizes the possession and consumption of marijuana by persons who are over 21 and includes provisions authorizing resentencing and destruction of records for prior cannabis convictions.

In addition to the five states that will be voting on adult-use cannabis, four states (Arkansas, Florida, Montana, and North Dakota) will be voting on legalizing medicinal cannabis on Election Day. In July, the Arkansas Secretary of State certified Arkansans for Compassionate Care's medical marijuana initiative, the Arkansas Medical Cannabis Act, which would allow seriously ill patients who have a certification from their doctor to obtain medical cannabis from nonprofit compassion centers. There are currently two competing medical cannabis initiatives appearing on the ballot in Arkansas in November, threatening to split the vote of the measures.

AUGUST

It was a quiet month in Washington, D.C., as all of Congress went home for August recess to relax -- and campaign, of course! However, in August the DEA announced that it would **not** re-schedule cannabis but **did** take steps to lift the NIDA monopoly on growing cannabis for studies, potentially paving the way for more research.

In Arizona, the Campaign to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol (Proposition 205) qualified for the ballot, ensuring that Arizonans will get their say on legalizing adult-use cannabis in November. In addition, North Dakota surprised the cannabis movement in August by getting the North Dakota Compassionate Care Act on the ballot, which would create a state-regulated medical

marijuana program for patients with specified debilitating conditions and written certifications from their doctors.

Like Bob Dylan said, “the times, they are a-changin’”: according to a Gallup poll released in August, one in eight U.S. adults say they consume marijuana. The poll found that thirteen percent of U.S. adults say they currently smoke marijuana -- nearly double the percentage who reported being marijuana consumers only three years ago.

SEPTEMBER

Congress returned to Washington, D.C. in September for the last time before Election Day. It is expected that Congress will pass a short-term continuing resolution to fund the government through December and take up the appropriations process after the election. Please see the call-to-action sheet included in your Cannabis Caucus folder to find out how **you** can help NCIA get pro-cannabis amendments included in the final budget bill.

Also in September, the American Legion, a well-known and highly respected veterans group, called on the federal government to reclassify cannabis and acknowledge its medicinal values. Cannabis has been used successfully by many veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but due to federal law, cannot be recommended by or talked about with Veterans Affairs doctors.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that marijuana abuse and dependency are becoming less common, even as states roll back restrictions on use. In 2014, the number of Americans aged 12 and over meeting diagnostic criteria for marijuana abuse or dependency stood at 1.6 percent, a decline from 1.8 percent in 2002, according to a report released in September by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the CDC.

The final quarter of 2016 is a crucial one for cannabis reform. Never before have so many states voted for reform in a single election. Make sure you're registered to vote, get to the polls on November 8th, and vote for candidates who support ending the failed policies of marijuana prohibition.