

Biden Highlights Cannabis Reform in Civil Rights Proclamation

President Biden Highlights Cannabis Reform in Proclamation on Civil Rights Act Anniversary

President Joe Biden has once again emphasized his administration's efforts to reform the "failed approach to cannabis" as part of a proclamation marking the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. Signed on Monday, the proclamation acknowledges the ongoing struggle to address racial inequities and honors the legacies of civil rights leaders, highlighting various administrative actions supporting Black communities, including cannabis reform.

A New Approach to Cannabis

"My Administration is changing our Nation's failed approach to cannabis, which disproportionately impacts communities of color," the proclamation states. Biden noted his extensive use of executive clemency to address justice and fairness, claiming to have used it more than any recent president at this stage in their presidency.

Executive Clemency and Cannabis Reform

Biden's administration has pardoned thousands of individuals convicted of cannabis possession and initiated a cannabis scheduling review, leading the Justice Department to propose reclassifying the drug. The public comment period for this proposed rule is currently ongoing.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reinforced the president's message during a Tuesday briefing, reiterating that the administration is working to rectify the nation's approach to marijuana, which has disproportionately impacted communities of color.

Ongoing Efforts and Recognition

Biden has previously highlighted his cannabis pardons and scheduling directive in proclamations marking "Second Chance Month." In 2022, he cited these pardons as part of his administration's broader effort to address racial justice. Last month, the White House acknowledged Maryland Governor's issuance of over 175,000 pardons for marijuana and paraphernalia convictions, with Biden expressing commendation for the action.

Addressing Rhetoric and Realities

In May, during a rally in Philadelphia, Biden discussed his mass cannabis pardons and clarified that these clemency actions did not expunge records, adjusting his rhetoric to align with the legal realities of his

actions. However, he has not indicated a willingness to extend relief to offenses beyond simple possession, maintaining a firm stance against growing or distributing cannabis.

Future Implications

The White House drug czar, Rahul Gupta, has discussed the potential implications of the rescheduling move [Biden Administration Advocates Cannabis Pardons, Rescheduling, Citing Reduced Risks](#), describing it as a “historic” reform that could facilitate cannabis-based drug development. Gupta also suggested that a Schedule III reclassification might help address racial disparities in marijuana enforcement, although this impact remains debated.

Comparing Administrations

The Biden-Harris campaign has contrasted their marijuana policy actions with those of former President Donald Trump. They highlight that the Department of Justice under Trump rescinded federal cannabis enforcement guidance, which generally promoted a policy of non-interference with states that had legalized marijuana.

President Biden’s proclamation and the administration’s ongoing efforts signal a significant shift in the federal approach to cannabis, aiming to rectify past injustices and promote fairness in drug policy.

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