

Union Advocates for Labor Peace in Oregon Cannabis Industry

Ballot Initiative Submitted to Mandate Labor Peace Agreements in Oregon Cannabis Industry

Salem, OR — In a significant move towards enhancing worker protections in the burgeoning cannabis industry, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 has submitted over 160,000 signatures to the Oregon Secretary of State's office. This effort aims to place an initiative on the November ballot to mandate labor peace agreements within the state's cannabis sector.

Legislative Efforts and Campaign

The ballot initiative comes after the Oregon legislature declined to pass a similar bill during the 2023 session. UFCW Local 555, a regional chapter of the national labor union, had lobbied vigorously for the legislation. Following the bill's failure, the union decided to take the issue directly to the voters. UFCW believes this grassroots campaign will garner the necessary support to ensure labor peace agreements are mandated for the cannabis industry.

Worker Protections

“Simply put, the ballot measure will require any cannabis dispensary or processor to enter into a labor peace agreement affirming the right of their workers to form a union if they so choose,” explained Miles Eshaia, spokesperson for UFCW Local 555. He noted that unlike states such as California, New York, and New Jersey, Oregon did not incorporate worker protections into its initial [cannabis legalization](#) framework. This initiative aims to rectify that oversight, providing essential rights and protections for cannabis industry workers.

Business Licensure and Compliance

The proposed measure includes strict compliance requirements for cannabis businesses. Specifically, the failure to provide proof of a labor peace agreement would be grounds for denial or revocation of a cannabis business license. These agreements require employers to remain neutral during union representation communications with employees, ensuring a fair and unbiased environment for workers considering unionization.

Industry Regulation

Dan Clay, president of UFCW Local 555, criticized the current state of cannabis industry regulation in Oregon. He described the licensing process as having “many holes, with sloppy regulation and rampant safety violations.” Clay argued that this lack of stringent oversight forces reputable employers to compete

against those who cut corners, undermining industry standards and worker safety.

If the ballot initiative passes, Oregon's cannabis industry will see significant changes in how labor relations are managed. By mandating labor peace agreements, the measure aims to protect workers' rights, ensure fair competition among businesses, and elevate overall industry standards. The UFCW Local 555's campaign represents a pivotal step towards integrating worker protections into Oregon's cannabis regulatory framework, aligning it more closely with practices in other states that have legalized cannabis.

The success of this initiative could set a precedent for other states considering similar measures, furthering the cause of labor rights in the rapidly growing cannabis industry.

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