

DeSantis Takes Aim at Florida Cannabis Measure in GOP Speech

DeSantis Attacks Cannabis Legalization Initiative, Makes Hyperbolic Claims

Milwaukee, WI – Florida Governor Ron DeSantis (R) on Wednesday vehemently criticized Amendment 3, a marijuana legalization initiative slated for the state’s November ballot, claiming it would grant an expansive and unmanageable right to cannabis use. Speaking to the Florida Republican delegation at the Republican National Convention, DeSantis described the proposed constitutional amendment as “limitless,” suggesting it would establish marijuana rights exceeding those provided by the First and Second Amendments.

DeSantis’ Claims

DeSantis asserted that the initiative would allow unrestricted constitutional rights to possess and smoke marijuana. He cited the proposal’s three-ounce limit on marijuana possession, speculating it equates to an impractically large number of joints. “I think it’s up to like, what, 40 joints? Is that what the three ounces would be, 40—more than that? Eighty joints, something like that,” he claimed. “It will be bad for quality of life, and it will make Florida more blue.”

He urged Florida Republicans to oppose both the marijuana measure and a separate amendment aimed at expanding legal access to abortion. “We’ve got to be united as Republicans and do what’s right,” DeSantis said.

Party and Public Response

The Florida Republican Party officially opposed Amendment 3 in May. DeSantis’ remarks at the convention echoed their stance, asserting that the marijuana legalization measure would establish broader rights than those granted by the First and Second Amendments. He warned that the reform would allow open consumption in public spaces, including privately owned restaurants.

Fact-Checking the Claims

Backers of Amendment 3 refuted DeSantis’ assertions as “absolutely untrue.” Trulieve spokesperson Steve Vancore, whose company has significantly funded the legalization effort, stated, “The clear terms and limits are outlined in the actual ballot language, including the ability of Florida lawmakers to enact restrictions on when and where someone can smoke.” He emphasized that the proposal would not create a limitless constitutional right and highlighted the company’s roots in Florida, countering DeSantis’ claims of foreign corporate influence.

Campaign Funding and Opposition

DeSantis has consistently criticized the corporate backing of the marijuana amendment, noting that the campaign is predominantly funded by Trulieve. “This is being driven by one company from Canada,” DeSantis claimed, despite Trulieve being founded in Florida.

Recent reports revealed that DeSantis’ “Florida Freedom Fund” received a \$100,000 donation from the cannabis company group POB Ventures to help defeat the marijuana and abortion proposals. POB Ventures CEO Patrick O’Brien, while not opposing adult-use cannabis legalization in principle, expressed concerns over the ballot initiative’s language, suggesting it provides optional rather than mandatory licensing for new businesses.

Public Opinion and Economic Implications

Despite DeSantis’ objections, public support for the marijuana initiative remains strong. A Fox News poll released last month indicated that two in three Florida voters support the measure, with bipartisan approval.

Economic analysts estimate that the marijuana legalization initiative could generate between \$195.6 million and \$431.3 million in new sales tax revenue annually if enacted. These figures could rise significantly if lawmakers impose an additional excise tax on cannabis transactions.

Looking Ahead

As the November election approaches, DeSantis continues to campaign against Amendment 3, emphasizing his concerns about public safety and quality of life. However, proponents of the initiative argue that regulated legalization offers a safer and more economically beneficial alternative to the current status quo. The outcome of this vote will be pivotal for Florida’s cannabis laws and could have broader implications for similar measures across the United States.

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