

Senate Committee Backs Bill to End Cannabis Job Disqualifications

Senate Committee Approves Measure to End Consideration of Past Cannabis Use for Federal Jobs and Security Clearances

In a significant step toward modernizing employment practices, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee has voted 9-5 to approve legislation aimed at eliminating the disqualification of federal job applicants and security clearance candidates based solely on prior cannabis use. This measure, known as [the Dismantling Outdated Obstacles and Barriers to Individual Employment \(DOOBIE\) Act](#), reflects a growing recognition of changing attitudes toward cannabis use across the United States.

Details of the DOOBIE Act

Introduced earlier this summer by committee chair Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), the DOOBIE Act is designed to address the discrimination that individuals who have used cannabis face when applying for federal jobs. The bill seeks to expand the talent pool available to federal agencies by removing outdated barriers that currently prevent qualified candidates from securing employment based on their past cannabis use.

The committee's approval marks a pivotal moment for the legislation, which was initially scheduled for a vote in July but postponed until this week. The bill will now advance to the full Senate for consideration, although a timeline for when it will be brought to the floor remains uncertain.

Advocates Call for Urgent Action

Advocates for the bill, including the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), have emphasized the need for swift passage. Morgan Fox, NORML's Political Director, stated, "At a time when most Americans think cannabis should be legal and most states allow its use in some form, it is ridiculous for the federal government to continue these outdated, unfair, and frankly dangerous hiring and security clearance approval policies." Fox added that maintaining such barriers puts the nation at a disadvantage by excluding qualified individuals from civil service roles.

This sentiment is echoed by similar initiatives, including the Cannabis Users' Restoration of Eligibility (CURE) Act, which gained bipartisan support in the House Oversight Committee last September. The growing momentum behind these legislative efforts suggests a shift in public policy towards more inclusive hiring practices.

Federal Agencies Adjusting Hiring Practices

Several federal agencies have already begun to reevaluate their hiring criteria concerning past cannabis use. The Office of Personnel Management has recommended that agencies limit the timeframe during which past

marijuana use is considered for employment suitability. This proactive approach reflects an understanding that previous cannabis consumption does not necessarily correlate with job performance or reliability.

The trend is mirrored at the state level, where more jurisdictions are implementing measures to protect the employment rights of cannabis consumers. As legalization efforts continue to gain traction, the need for federal policies to align with these changes becomes increasingly clear.

Research Supports Policy Change

Evidence supporting the shift in policy is compelling. Research indicates that responsible cannabis use during off-duty hours is not associated with increased workplace accidents or injuries. Additionally, jurisdictions that have enacted medical and adult-use legalization laws often see improved labor market outcomes, including higher workforce participation, lower absenteeism rates, reduced workers' compensation claims, and increased wages.

These findings underscore the argument that past cannabis use should not serve as a barrier to employment, particularly in a rapidly evolving job market where talent and skills are paramount.

The Senate Committee's approval of the DOOBIE Act marks a crucial step towards dismantling outdated employment barriers related to cannabis use. As the legislation moves to the full Senate for consideration, advocates are urging prompt action to ensure that federal hiring practices reflect the realities of modern society. The passage of this measure could pave the way for a more inclusive workforce, benefitting federal agencies and the nation as a whole.

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