

Missouri Governor Budgets for Intoxicating Hemp Ban

Missouri Governor's Hemp Product Ban May Resume in 2024, Budget Request Shows

While a large part of Missouri Governor Mike Parson's ban on intoxicating hemp products is currently on hold, plans are already in motion to revive the initiative by next summer. According to a preliminary budget request by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), significant funding has been earmarked to enforce the ban and regulate psychoactive hemp products in the state.

Budget Request Allocates Funds for Ban Enforcement

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has submitted a budget request for \$877,000 to cover the costs associated with "food inspection and litigation requirements" to implement Parson's executive order, which was issued on August 1, 2023. This order seeks to prohibit the sale of unregulated psychoactive hemp products, specifically those containing intoxicating cannabis compounds, unless they originate from an "approved source."

If lawmakers approve the department's request as part of the state budget, the funds would become available on July 1, 2024, signaling the resumption of the ban next summer.

Governor Parson's Executive Order on Psychoactive Hemp Products

Governor Parson's executive order aims to restrict the sale of foods containing psychoactive cannabis compounds, such as Delta-8 and Delta-9 THC, which are derived from hemp. These products have become popular in recent years due to their psychoactive effects, despite being marketed as legal under the 2018 federal Farm Bill, which allows for the sale of hemp-derived products containing less than 0.3% Delta-9 THC.

The order specifically targets psychoactive products that have been sold without regulation, citing public health concerns and the need for stricter oversight. It stipulates that only products originating from an "approved source," meaning those produced under regulated standards, would be allowed for sale. This move is designed to ensure the safety and quality of psychoactive hemp products available in Missouri.

Temporary Pause, but Set to Resume in 2024

The enforcement of Governor Parson's order has faced temporary delays, with parts of the ban currently paused as state regulators work through logistical challenges. However, the budget request indicates that the state is preparing to fully implement the ban by mid-2024, pending approval from lawmakers.

If the \$877,000 funding request is included in the state budget and approved by the Missouri legislature, the DHSS will ramp up enforcement efforts, conducting inspections and pursuing legal action against businesses

that fail to comply with the new rules.

Impact on Missouri's Hemp Industry

The potential enforcement of the ban could have a significant impact on Missouri's burgeoning hemp industry. Many businesses that sell hemp-derived products, such as edibles and vape cartridges containing Delta-8 or Delta-9 THC, may face stricter regulations or be forced to halt sales altogether if their products do not meet the state's standards.

Proponents of the ban argue that it will protect consumers from unregulated and potentially unsafe products, as many psychoactive hemp products currently on the market lack proper testing and oversight. Critics, however, contend that the ban could stifle innovation in the hemp industry and limit consumer access to popular products that have become widely available since the passage of the federal Farm Bill.

What Happens Next?

Missouri lawmakers are expected to review the budget request as part of the state's overall budget process, with a final decision likely to be made by May 2024. If the budget is approved, the DHSS will begin receiving funds by July 1, allowing the state to proceed with full implementation of the hemp product ban later in the summer.

For businesses in Missouri's hemp industry, the next several months will be crucial in determining how to adapt to the potential new regulations. Many may need to explore ways to ensure their products comply with the "approved source" requirement, while others may opt to shift their focus to non-psychoactive hemp products.

As the state continues to navigate the evolving landscape of hemp regulation, the outcome of this budget request will be closely watched by industry stakeholders, consumers, and public health advocates alike.

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