

# Pro-Cannabis Senators' Seats Could Shape Future Legalization

## 2024 U.S. Senate Elections: How 34 Seats Could Shape the Future of Cannabis Legalization

As the 2024 U.S. Senate elections approach, the fate of federal cannabis legalization hangs in the balance. With 34 Senate seats up for grabs, the election could significantly impact ongoing cannabis reform efforts, which have gained momentum across the U.S. in recent years. While states like Minnesota, Delaware, and Ohio have embraced recreational legalization in 2023 and 2024, and Florida is preparing to vote on a similar measure in November, the U.S. Senate remains a significant roadblock to comprehensive federal cannabis legalization.

### The Senate: A Major Roadblock for Cannabis Legalization

Despite growing public support for cannabis legalization, the U.S. Senate has been a major obstacle for federal reform. For example, the Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment, and Expungement (MORE) Act, which aims to decriminalize cannabis at the federal level and expunge certain cannabis-related convictions, passed the House of Representatives in both 2020 and 2022. However, it stalled in the Senate, where the filibuster rule requires 60 votes to advance most legislation.

Additionally, the Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act, a bill that would allow cannabis businesses to access banking services, has faced similar challenges in the Senate, despite enjoying bipartisan support. The combination of Senate procedural hurdles and divided political positions has prevented substantial progress on federal cannabis reform, despite the growing number of states legalizing cannabis for medical or recreational use.

### Five Swing States Could Shape Cannabis' Future

With the balance of power in the Senate at stake in 2024, five key swing states—Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—could play a pivotal role in determining the future of cannabis legalization. These states, which have shown significant momentum toward cannabis reform, are renewing Senate seats, and the outcome of these elections could dramatically alter the Senate's stance on the issue.

Currently, the Senate consists of 49 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and three Independents (Bernie Sanders, Angus King, and Kyrsten Sinema), with Independents typically caucusing with Democrats. As a result, the upcoming elections in swing states could either bolster or diminish the chances of cannabis reform advancing through the Senate.

### Arizona

Arizona, a conservative-leaning state, will see Kyrsten Sinema's Senate seat up for reelection. Sinema, who left the Democratic Party to become an Independent, has been a strong supporter of cannabis reform. She voted in favor of the MORE Act, sponsored the SAFE Banking Act, and supported Arizona's legalization of recreational cannabis in 2020. While Arizona's Republican leadership is generally conservative, they have accepted the state's existing cannabis laws without pushing for further restrictions. The 2024 election could either solidify support for cannabis or introduce new challenges if a more conservative candidate wins Sinema's seat.

## **Michigan**

In Michigan, the retirement of Democratic Senator Debbie Stabenow has created a key opportunity for change. Stabenow has been a consistent supporter of cannabis reform, co-sponsoring the SAFE Banking Act and advocating for federal decriminalization. She also supported Michigan's own cannabis laws. The outcome of the election for her replacement could have significant implications for the state's cannabis policies. If a candidate less supportive of reform is elected, it could slow Michigan's progress at the federal level.

## **Nevada**

Nevada, another crucial state in the cannabis reform landscape, will see Senator Jacky Rosen (D) run for reelection. Rosen has been a strong advocate for cannabis legalization, voting in favor of removing cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act and supporting Nevada's thriving recreational cannabis market. If Rosen retains her seat, it would likely maintain Nevada's pro-cannabis stance in the Senate, but a shift toward a less supportive candidate could impede federal reform efforts.

## **Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey (D) is also up for reelection in 2024. While more cautious than some of his colleagues, Casey has shown openness to cannabis reform, particularly when it comes to medical marijuana and criminal justice issues. The 2024 election in Pennsylvania will be closely watched, as it could tip the balance toward greater support for federal cannabis reform or solidify more conservative resistance to legalization efforts.

## **Wisconsin**

In Wisconsin, Senator Tammy Baldwin (D) has been a vocal supporter of cannabis reform, voting in favor of cannabis-related bills such as the MORE Act. Baldwin has backed both medical and recreational cannabis legalization in her home state. If she retains her seat, Wisconsin is likely to continue its trend toward supporting federal cannabis reform. However, if a more conservative candidate wins, it could weaken the momentum for federal legalization in the Senate.

## **A Potential Shift in the Senate**

The outcome of the 2024 Senate elections will have far-reaching implications for cannabis legalization at the federal level. If pro-cannabis candidates retain or win seats in key swing states, the chances of passing comprehensive federal cannabis reform could increase significantly. However, if Republicans gain control in these battleground states, the path to legalization may face new obstacles, given the GOP's historically more conservative stance on cannabis policy.

Currently, none of the Senate seats up for reelection in these five swing states are held by Republicans who have expressed strong support for cannabis reform. A shift toward Republican victories in these states could slow progress on cannabis legalization at the federal level, especially if those elected are less inclined to support reform.

On the other hand, should pro-cannabis candidates succeed in these crucial races, the likelihood of passing major cannabis reform—such as the MORE Act or the SAFE Banking Act—could increase. With public support for cannabis reform continuing to grow and both major presidential candidates—Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump—expressing support for various forms of cannabis reform, the 2024 elections could mark a turning point for cannabis policy in the U.S.

The [2024 U.S. Senate elections](#) could be a pivotal moment for the future of cannabis legalization in the United States. With 34 Senate seats up for grabs, including those in critical swing states, the balance of power in the Senate could either open the door for federal cannabis reform or reinforce the barriers that have long stymied progress. As public support for cannabis legalization continues to rise, the outcome of these elections will shape the direction of U.S. cannabis policy for years to come.

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