

# North Dakota Ad Campaign Pushes for Adult Cannabis Legalization

## North Dakota's Measure 5: Advocates Push for Cannabis Legalization to Boost Economy and Reform Criminal Justice

With Election Day just a week away, North Dakota advocates are intensifying their campaign for Measure 5, a ballot initiative to legalize adult-use cannabis. Supporters argue that legalization could unlock substantial economic benefits for the state, providing millions in tax revenue and supporting local job growth. Led by the New Economic Frontier campaign, the push for Measure 5 emphasizes both financial incentives and the potential for social reforms, making a strong appeal to North Dakota voters as they prepare to head to the polls.

### North Dakota Missing Out on Economic Potential from Cannabis Legalization?

The New Economic Frontier campaign recently launched a compelling ad asking, "Would you throw away millions of dollars?" This pointed question highlights the economic potential that North Dakota could be missing as neighboring states like Montana reap tax benefits from legalized cannabis sales. According to the campaign, Montana has generated over \$118 million in tax revenue within just two years of legalizing adult-use cannabis, offering a glimpse of what North Dakota could gain with Measure 5.

In a promotional email, the campaign outlined broader benefits of the measure beyond tax revenue, including the creation of new jobs and advancements in criminal justice reform. Advocates argue that cannabis legalization aligns with North Dakota's values of self-reliance and economic stability, stressing that the revenue from legal sales could help fund essential public services without increasing taxes.

"We're seeing our neighbors to the west make real strides with cannabis legalization," says Rachel Peterson, spokesperson for New Economic Frontier. "North Dakota shouldn't be left behind in an economic movement that could help our communities, create jobs, and increase state revenue."

### Overcoming Voter Uncertainty and Opposition from Conservative Groups

Despite recent polls indicating solid support for Measure 5, uncertainty among undecided voters remains a key challenge. The New Economic Frontier campaign has ramped up efforts to persuade these voters by framing cannabis legalization as compatible with conservative values, particularly around individual freedoms and the promise of economic self-sufficiency. However, the measure faces opposition from influential organizations, including the North Dakota Medical Association and various law enforcement groups, who argue that legalization could have unintended public health consequences and strain state resources.

The opposition is largely rooted in concerns over public safety and health, with skeptics questioning the potential impacts of legal cannabis on addiction rates, impaired driving, and law enforcement. "We

understand the economic arguments, but we also have to consider the potential costs to public health and safety,” stated a representative of the North Dakota Medical Association.

Lawmakers, too, are divided over the economic projections tied to cannabis legalization. The state has estimated that Measure 5 could bring in \$10.3 million in revenue over the 2025-2027 period if passed. Supporters argue that this funding could be allocated to infrastructure projects and public services, providing the state with much-needed financial support without relying on increased taxes. Opponents, however, worry that any potential revenue gains could be offset by expenses tied to public health and safety.

### **Personal Stories and Calls for Criminal Justice Reform**

Advocates for Measure 5 are also emphasizing the need for criminal justice reform in their arguments for legalization. Currently, many North Dakotans face significant penalties for cannabis use, which can have far-reaching effects on their lives, from limited access to employment and rental assistance to barriers in education. Property owner Alexandra, a supporter of Measure 5, shared that many of her tenants struggle with the consequences of cannabis-related charges, which she considers unjust.

“These penalties can completely derail a person’s life,” Alexandra explained, noting how past convictions impact her tenants’ ability to access housing and other vital services. “Measure 5 offers a path to fairness and an opportunity for people to move beyond minor offenses without sacrificing their future.”

In addition to reducing penalties for low-level cannabis offenses, Measure 5 advocates argue that legalization could reduce the strain on law enforcement, allowing resources to be redirected toward more pressing public safety concerns.

### **Measure 5: Key Provisions and Framework for Legalization**

If approved, Measure 5 would allow adults aged 21 and older to purchase and possess up to one ounce of cannabis legally. Additionally, it would permit residents to grow cannabis for personal use, with restrictions to ensure controlled access and prevent monopolization within the industry. The proposed measure also includes a limit on the number of licensed dispensaries to balance accessibility with regulatory oversight, aiming to avoid an oversaturation of the market while ensuring a legal and safe avenue for purchases.

These provisions mirror policies in other states that have successfully implemented cannabis legalization, with the goal of creating a balanced and responsibly regulated cannabis market in North Dakota. Advocates of Measure 5 believe this approach can serve as a model for future cannabis legislation, incorporating lessons from neighboring states while addressing the specific needs and values of North Dakotans.

### **The Economic Case for Legalization: Jobs, Tax Revenue, and Public Investment**

Supporters of Measure 5 are optimistic about the potential economic impact of legal cannabis, pointing to examples from other states that have seen a boom in job creation, tourism, and local business growth. According to campaign data, Montana’s cannabis industry generated thousands of jobs within two years of legalization. Proponents of Measure 5 believe that North Dakota could see similar benefits, from new jobs in retail and agriculture to increased tourism and investment in local businesses.

The tax revenue generated from legalized cannabis could provide much-needed funds for state infrastructure, education, and public health initiatives. Advocates highlight that these funds could be directed toward improving roads, expanding mental health services, and supporting schools, helping address areas that are often underfunded. This potential for targeted public investment has become a central talking point as advocates rally undecided voters who might otherwise be hesitant about legalization.

## **Measure 5 and the Bigger Picture: National Trends and North Dakota's Future**

If Measure 5 is approved, North Dakota would join 24 other states that have legalized adult-use cannabis. The national trend toward legalization has been accompanied by shifting attitudes and an acknowledgment of the benefits legal cannabis can bring to communities. However, the debate in North Dakota remains intense, with some voters concerned about the potential social impacts and others focused on the potential for economic and criminal justice reform.

Many proponents believe that North Dakota has an opportunity to become a leader in the region, paving the way for responsible cannabis use while supporting its economy and providing a fairer legal framework for residents. As Election Day approaches, supporters of Measure 5 are encouraging all voters to consider the potential benefits for the state, from job creation and increased revenue to a reduction in the legal consequences tied to cannabis possession.

### **The Countdown to Election Day**

With just days remaining before the election, the future of Measure 5—and the legalization of adult-use cannabis in North Dakota—hangs in the balance. Advocates are urging supporters to turn out and make their voices heard, emphasizing the positive impact legalization could have on North Dakota's economy and social fabric. Opponents, however, remain vocal about their concerns, emphasizing the need for caution and the potential risks tied to increased cannabis availability.

Whether Measure 5 passes or not, the debate over cannabis legalization in North Dakota underscores the growing national conversation about how cannabis fits into modern American society. For supporters, the hope is that North Dakota will seize this opportunity to embrace change, capturing economic benefits and supporting a fairer legal system. For others, the outcome of the vote will shape the state's approach to drug policy and public health for years to come.

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