

# Biden Should Pardon Nonviolent Cannabis Offenders

## Biden's Pardon of Hunter Biden Exposes Deep Hypocrisy in U.S. Justice System

President Joe Biden's recent decision to pardon his son, Hunter Biden, has reignited intense debate over fairness and equity in America's justice system. While Hunter walks free, thousands of Americans remain incarcerated for nonviolent marijuana offenses, highlighting an uncomfortable contradiction between the president's actions and his campaign promises.

Biden vowed to address injustices tied to the war on drugs, including granting clemency to nonviolent marijuana offenders. Yet, as his presidency nears its conclusion, he has failed to follow through on these commitments in a meaningful way. The result is a glaring hypocrisy that undermines trust in the justice system and raises questions about the administration's priorities.

### A Broken Promise to Nonviolent Marijuana Offenders

One of President Biden's campaign pledges was to free individuals imprisoned for nonviolent marijuana offenses. This initiative was seen as a way to address systemic racial and economic disparities perpetuated by the war on drugs. Yet, despite public declarations, the administration has largely focused on symbolic actions.

For example, Biden pardoned low-level marijuana possession offenses in 2022—a move widely celebrated at the time. However, the pardons did not apply to anyone currently incarcerated. They were limited to individuals convicted of simple possession, a charge that rarely leads to imprisonment at the federal level. The net effect? Not a single person was released from prison.

Adding insult to injury, Biden's administration has commuted the sentences of individuals already under home confinement as a result of the CARES Act—a move that provides closure for some but does little for those languishing behind bars. These limited gestures fall short of the sweeping reforms many had hoped for, leaving countless families devastated.

### A Stark Double Standard in Cannabis Justice

While individuals remain incarcerated for marijuana-related offenses, the state-regulated cannabis industry continues to flourish. Companies like California-based Glass House Brands profit legally from activities that are still punishable by decades in federal prison for others.

This discrepancy between state and federal policies underscores the double standard in cannabis justice. Entrepreneurs and corporations in legal states are celebrated for their innovation, while people who engaged in similar conduct before legalization remain imprisoned. The hypocrisy is especially glaring when the president's own son benefits from a pardon, yet thousands of less-privileged Americans are denied similar

mercy.

## **The Role of Congress and the Presidential Pardon Expungement Act**

In the absence of decisive action from the White House, Congress has attempted to address these disparities. In November 2024, Representative Kelly Armstrong introduced the Weldon Angelos Presidential Pardon Expungement Act, a bipartisan effort aimed at granting individuals with presidential pardons the opportunity to fully expunge their criminal records.

This legislation recognizes the lingering consequences of a criminal record, even after a pardon. Many individuals face barriers to employment, housing, and reintegration into society due to their past convictions. By offering a path to expungement, the bill could help rectify some of the systemic injustices tied to marijuana offenses.

While this initiative provides hope, its success depends on support from both outgoing and incoming administrations. Advocacy groups and affected families are urging Biden and his successor to prioritize the bill, emphasizing its potential to restore fairness and equity.

## **The Hypocrisy of Privilege**

The contrast between the treatment of Hunter Biden and thousands of incarcerated Americans sends a troubling message. It highlights how privilege and political connections can shield individuals from the harshest consequences of the justice system, while others continue to suffer.

For families like those of Parker Coleman and Jerry Haymon, the inaction feels deeply personal. These individuals represent the human cost of the president's broken promises. They remain separated from their loved ones, enduring sentences that often far exceed the gravity of their offenses.

The president's pardon of his son underscores the importance of compassion and understanding. As a parent who has experienced the anguish of a child facing legal jeopardy, Biden has a unique opportunity to extend the same empathy to others. Fulfilling his promises to nonviolent marijuana offenders would be a powerful step toward restoring trust in his administration and the broader justice system.

## **The Stakes for Biden's Legacy**

Time is running out for President Biden to make good on his campaign pledges. With his presidency drawing to a close, the opportunity to grant clemency and address cannabis-related injustices is slipping away.

Failing to act would not only tarnish his legacy but also leave unresolved issues for the next administration. Former President Donald Trump has already indicated that he plans to address marijuana clemency if re-elected. By taking action now, Biden could ensure that progress is made under his leadership rather than leaving the work unfinished.

Justice demands consistency, and the current disparities in cannabis enforcement reflect a system that prioritizes privilege over fairness. Americans deserve better, and the president has the power to deliver.

## **A Call for Compassion and Action**

President Biden's decision to pardon Hunter Biden has placed a spotlight on the inequities of America's justice system. While the pardon reflects personal compassion, it also highlights the broader hypocrisy of an administration that has failed to extend similar mercy to thousands of others.

As the cannabis industry thrives and public attitudes toward marijuana shift, the urgency for clemency grows. Families continue to wait, hoping that the president will use his remaining time in office to fulfill his promises and bring justice to those who have suffered under outdated drug policies.

The clock is ticking, and the stakes could not be higher. It's time for President Biden to act, delivering the fairness and equality that Americans deserve.

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