

# Georgia Lawmakers Propose Major Changes to Cannabis Laws

## Georgia Legislature Moves Forward with Major Overhaul of Medical Cannabis and Hemp Laws

The cannabis landscape in Georgia is undergoing a transformation as lawmakers debate new regulations that could impact both medical marijuana and hemp industries. With several bills passing the Senate ahead of the legislative session's Crossover Day deadline, these measures could bring major changes to the state's cannabis policies.

### Understanding Cannabis Terminology and Federal Law Implications

Before delving into Georgia's proposed legislation, it is important to understand the distinctions between cannabis, marijuana, and hemp. Cannabis is the scientific name for the plant, while marijuana and hemp are legal classifications based on THC content. Federally, marijuana remains a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, meaning its manufacture, possession, and sale are illegal. However, many states have enacted medical or recreational marijuana programs, which the federal government has largely chosen not to interfere with.

### Georgia's Medical Cannabis Program Could See Major Reforms

Georgia's current medical cannabis program, established in 2015, has faced numerous challenges in its rollout. Now, the state Senate has passed Senate Bill 220, also called the "Putting Georgia's Patients First Act," which aims to revamp the system.

SB 220 proposes the following key changes:

Replacing the term "low-THC oil" with "medical cannabis" in Georgia law.

Removing the requirement that medical conditions such as cancer or Parkinson's disease must be "severe or end-stage" to qualify for treatment.

Adding lupus to the list of qualifying conditions.

Increasing the THC limit in medical cannabis products from 5% to 50%.

Allowing caregivers to pick up medical cannabis from pharmacies.

Removing restrictions on vaping cannabis oil.

While the bill has passed the Senate, it still faces scrutiny, with some legislators opposing elements such as increased THC limits and expanded eligibility.

## **Tighter Regulations on Hemp and THC-Infused Products Are in the Works**

Two additional bills—Senate Bill 33 and Senate Bill 254—aim to regulate the rapidly expanding hemp market in Georgia. These bills come amid concerns that unregulated hemp products with high THC content are being sold without proper consumer protections.

### **Senate Bill 33:**

Introduced by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick.

Focuses on regulating chemical compounds such as [delta-8 THC and delta-10 THC](#).

Aims to ensure all THC-infused products are tested and labeled properly.

Seeks to limit the import of unregulated hemp products from countries like China.

### **Senate Bill 254:**

Sponsored by Sen. Bill Cowsert.

Initially proposed limiting THC-infused beverages to 5 mg per serving but was amended to ban them entirely.

Aims to bring Georgia in line with other states that have stricter limits on THC concentrations in beverages and other consumables.

Passed the Senate with a 42-14 vote after a heated debate.

## **The Battle Between Cannabis and Hemp Interests in Georgia**

A key underlying issue in these legislative debates is the competition between cannabis and hemp businesses. Marijuana companies are heavily regulated and taxed, while hemp businesses currently face fewer restrictions. Some believe that certain players in the marijuana industry support stricter hemp regulations to reduce competition.

On the other hand, consumer safety advocates argue that tighter regulations are necessary to prevent misleading labeling and unregulated [THC consumption](#). The push to ban THC-infused beverages in Georgia reflects this concern, as legislators seek to prevent products with potentially high psychoactive effects from being widely available.

## **What's Next for Georgia's Cannabis Industry?**

While these bills have passed the Senate, they must still clear the House before becoming law. The debate over medical marijuana access, hemp regulation, and THC potency limits is far from over. The outcome will shape Georgia's cannabis market for years to come, influencing businesses, consumers, and medical patients alike.

With powerful lobbying efforts from both the marijuana and hemp industries, as well as opposition from some lawmakers, it remains uncertain how much of the proposed legislation will ultimately be enacted. Industry stakeholders and consumers should closely monitor the situation as the legislative session progresses.

As Georgia navigates this evolving cannabis landscape, one thing is clear: the state's approach to cannabis regulation is poised for a significant shift, and the impact will be felt across multiple sectors. Lawmakers will need to strike a balance between consumer protection, business interests, and medical access as they shape the future of cannabis in Georgia.

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