Florida Cannabis Legalization Campaign Highlights Tax Revenue for Schools and Roads

Supporters of the proposed state constitutional amendment to legalize recreational adult use of cannabis in Florida emphasize the potential increase in state revenues. The nonpartisan Florida Financial Impact Estimating Conference reported that Amendment 3 could generate between $195.6 million and $431 million annually in state and local taxes once the retail market is fully operational.

Public Discussion in Tampa

On Thursday, Smart and Safe Florida, the advocacy group for Amendment 3, held a public discussion in Tampa with elected officials and stakeholders about using the potential revenue for public benefits. Hillsborough County Commissioner Harry Cohen highlighted numerous needs, including a new criminal courthouse, fire stations, roads, sidewalks, schools, wastewater, and stormwater projects. “Anything that can help relieve some of this is beneficial, and this is money that is slipping away to the black market,” Cohen said.

Legislative Skepticism

Former St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman expressed skepticism about the GOP-controlled Legislature allocating funds to local governments. He suggested the revenue could support agencies like the Florida Department of Transportation for mass transit and roadway projects due to reduced gas tax collections and the rise of electric vehicles.

Specific Allocation of Funds

Sean Shaw, a former Florida House member and current Hillsborough County Commission candidate, emphasized the need for dedicated funding rather than adding to the general state budget. “I would want it dedicated for this, this, this, or this, and not into the giant state budget where some things might happen,” Shaw said.

Historical Context and Skepticism

Darryl Jones, a member of the Leon County School Board, noted the importance of transparency and commitment regarding fund allocation, referencing the Florida Lottery funds’ promises for education that were not entirely fulfilled. “We don’t want that to happen again,” Jones emphasized.

Broader Distribution Goals

Jake Hoffman, executive director of the Tampa Bay Young Republicans, focused on returning funds to taxpayers, potentially offsetting property taxes and insurance costs. “Everybody is going to have their hands out asking for that money," Hoffman said, stressing the importance of benefiting average Floridians.

Comparison with Other States

According to a December 2023 Tax Foundation report, 21 states tax recreational cannabis. Examples of fund distribution include:

Arizona: Revenues go to community college districts, public safety, highways, and public health services for communities impacted by marijuana arrests.

Oregon: Funds support state schools, mental health treatment, police, cities, counties, and drug abuse prevention programs.

Montana: Funds go to wildlife habitat, state parks, trails, veterans, crisis intervention training, and drug detection programs.

The focus on tax revenue from cannabis legalization in Florida highlights the potential benefits for public infrastructure and services. With strong support and a clear plan for fund allocation, Amendment 3 aims to provide significant financial boosts to schools and roads, addressing long-standing needs in the state.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060