

Impact of Federal Seizures on New Mexico's Cannabis Businesses

In recent weeks, a troubling trend has emerged along the border checkpoints of New Mexico: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents are reportedly seizing regulated cannabis products, a move that has sent shockwaves through the state's licensed cannabis businesses. This marks a significant departure from the hands-off approach that federal authorities had previously taken toward states with legalized cannabis.

New Mexico, having legalized medical cannabis in 2019 and adult-use cannabis in 2021, had enjoyed a relatively peaceful coexistence between state laws and federal regulations. However, the recent seizures have disrupted this harmony, sparking concerns among local business owners and industry representatives. They argue that these federal actions not only harm small businesses but also deprive the state of much-needed tax revenue.

Ben Lewinger, the executive director of the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce, has been vocal about the issue, noting that neighboring states like California and Arizona have not experienced a similar uptick in federal enforcement. He has called on the Biden administration to intervene and instruct the Department of Homeland Security to cease targeting a product that poses no real threat.

The impact of these seizures hit close to home for **Nick Spoor**, the operations manager at Top Crop Cannabis Co. His company had been compliantly transporting cannabis products through CBP checkpoints for over a year without incident. However, they were caught off guard when their vehicle was stopped, and their products were confiscated.

The situation took a turn for the worse when Ethan Ramsey, an employee of Las Cruces-based cannabis producer Head Space Alchemy, was arrested by CBP agents while delivering samples to a cannabis lab. The company estimates losses of approximately \$20,000 in seized products, and their employees now have records with federal authorities.

A spokesperson for CBP reiterated the federal stance on marijuana, emphasizing that it remains a Schedule I controlled substance under federal law. As such, CBP agents are obligated to enforce the law against anyone in possession of marijuana within the United States.

Matt Chadwick, CEO of **Top Crop Cannabis Co.**, underscored the dire consequences that these seizures could have on businesses. For many, it could mean losing everything they've worked hard to build. He emphasized the human toll of these federal actions and called for a fairer approach that takes into account the livelihoods of those involved.

As the situation unfolds, the cannabis industry in New Mexico finds itself at a crossroads, grappling with the unexpected challenges posed by federal intervention. How state and federal authorities navigate this delicate balance will determine the future of regulated cannabis businesses in the state.

