

Florida Activists Hit Signature Goal for 2026 Weed Vote

Florida Cannabis Legalization Campaign Reaches Major Milestone As Signature Count Triggers State Fiscal and Judicial Review

Smart & Safe Florida Surpasses Initial Signature Threshold Just Months After Launching 2026 Legalization Effort

A campaign to legalize recreational marijuana in Florida has crossed a critical early hurdle, collecting enough valid signatures to prompt a state-mandated review of its proposed ballot initiative. According to data released by the Florida Division of Elections, Smart & Safe Florida has submitted 377,832 valid voter signatures—well above the 222,898 required to initiate a fiscal and judicial review.

The signature collection marks a significant early success for the campaign, which is mounting its second attempt in as many election cycles to secure voter approval for adult-use marijuana legalization. Their previous initiative in 2024 earned a majority of the vote but failed to clear the 60 percent supermajority required to amend the state constitution.

Campaign's Path Forward Includes Judicial Scrutiny and Economic Analysis by State Authorities

Under Florida election law, once an initiative surpasses the initial signature threshold, the state must conduct two formal reviews: one by the Florida Supreme Court to evaluate the legality and clarity of the ballot language, and another by state economists to assess the potential fiscal impacts of the measure on public revenue and expenditures.

This dual review is a required checkpoint before any citizen-led constitutional amendment can proceed to the full signature-gathering phase needed for placement on the 2026 general election ballot. Ultimately, the campaign will need to submit 880,062 valid signatures from registered Florida voters, and meet distribution thresholds across congressional districts.

Revised Legalization Proposal Includes New Public Consumption Restrictions in Response to Past Criticism

Smart & Safe Florida submitted the latest version of the legalization proposal just months after the narrow defeat of its 2024 initiative. Learning from that experience, campaign leaders have made several adjustments to the language of the measure to address legal concerns and political objections.

One prominent change is a provision that explicitly prohibits smoking and vaping marijuana in public places. Additionally, the measure grants the legislature authority to regulate “the time, place, and manner” of

marijuana use in public—an effort to reassure critics who previously argued the initiative lacked adequate safeguards around public consumption.

These revisions appear aimed in part at countering criticism from Governor Ron DeSantis, who repeatedly objected to the 2024 initiative for allegedly allowing unchecked public marijuana use. DeSantis described the smell of cannabis as “offensive” and questioned whether legalization should be enshrined in the state constitution rather than enacted through the legislature.

Governor DeSantis Predicts Legal Trouble Ahead for the 2026 Measure, But Voter Support Remains Strong

Despite the changes, Gov. DeSantis has expressed skepticism that the new initiative will survive review by the Florida Supreme Court. He suggested earlier this year that the measure contains vague or misleading provisions and predicted it could be blocked from reaching voters, though he did not provide specific legal concerns.

That stance mirrors his public comments from 2023, when he accurately anticipated that the state’s highest court would allow the 2024 measure onto the ballot. This time, however, he has suggested that the revised language will face greater judicial scrutiny.

Yet polls continue to show solid public backing for adult-use marijuana legalization in the state. A survey released in February found 67 percent of Florida voters in favor of legalizing cannabis, including majorities of Democrats (82 percent), independents (66 percent), and Republicans (55 percent).

Still, a separate poll from the Florida Chamber of Commerce—the leading business group opposing legalization—reported that while 53 percent of likely voters supported the measure, it would fall short of the 60 percent threshold required for passage.

Florida Legislature Approves New Ballot Initiative Restrictions That Could Hinder Future Citizen-Led Reform

The legalization campaign’s progress comes against the backdrop of new legislative efforts to make citizen-led constitutional amendments more difficult in Florida. Just last month, Gov. DeSantis signed a Republican-backed bill imposing additional restrictions on ballot initiatives, a move critics say is designed to limit voters’ ability to directly shape state policy on issues like cannabis reform, abortion, and voting rights.

The new law could increase the burden on campaigns like Smart & Safe Florida by adding legal, financial, and administrative hurdles during both the signature collection and review phases.

Campaign Faces Political Headwinds Amid Claims of Misleading Advocacy and Mixed Messaging From Trump

The Smart & Safe Florida campaign has also faced political controversy stemming from its ties to industry funders, including the multi-state cannabis operator Trulieve. During the 2024 campaign, the initiative received tens of millions of dollars from Trulieve and allied stakeholders, prompting accusations of a corporate-driven legalization agenda.

More recently, a Republican state senator claimed the campaign “tricked” former President Donald Trump into endorsing the 2024 initiative by misrepresenting its contents. Trump had publicly supported the amendment last year, calling it “very good” for Florida. His remarks came after private meetings with Trulieve CEO Kim Rivers and pro-legalization Republican lawmakers.

However, since returning to office, Trump has been largely silent on marijuana policy, despite endorsing federal cannabis rescheduling, banking reform, and the failed 2024 Florida ballot measure. Some of his newly appointed Cabinet members and advisers have mixed records on drug policy, leading to uncertainty about how his administration would approach reform at the national level.

Legalization Advocates Celebrate Progress But Prepare for Court Challenges and Political Resistance

As Florida's 2026 marijuana legalization initiative advances to the next phase, activists are celebrating an early victory while bracing for intensified legal and political opposition. The campaign's revised language, strong early polling, and rapid signature collection suggest momentum, but the ultimate success of the measure will hinge on the outcome of judicial review, the ability to meet the full signature requirement, and navigating a tough political climate.

The coming months will reveal whether Florida voters will get another chance to legalize adult-use cannabis—or whether state officials will block the measure before it ever reaches the ballot.

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