

Letter Urges Trump to End Cannabis Arrests to Cut Federal Costs

Congressional Democrats Urge President Trump to Halt Federal Cannabis Arrests as Part of Broad Government Cost-Saving Push

Letter From Senator Warren and Rep. Stansbury Highlights Cannabis Enforcement as a Major Source of Waste in the Federal Budget

June 17, 2025 – Democratic lawmakers have formally requested that President Donald Trump end federal cannabis-related arrests, arguing the move could significantly reduce unnecessary government expenditures. The proposal was laid out in a letter sent to the president by U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and U.S. Representative Melanie Stansbury of New Mexico, as part of a broader effort to increase fiscal responsibility across federal agencies.

The lawmakers contend that the United States spends billions of taxpayer dollars annually enforcing cannabis laws, despite the widespread legalization of the substance at the state level. Their letter asserts that reforming cannabis enforcement alone would save the government billions, while the cumulative effect of all recommended reforms could total trillions in long-term savings.

Cannabis Arrests Cited as Financial Burden on Federal System and Example of Misaligned Enforcement Priorities

At the heart of the letter is a critique of the continued federal enforcement of cannabis prohibition—a practice Warren and Stansbury say is out of step with modern state-level policies and public opinion. Nearly half of U.S. states have legalized recreational cannabis, and the vast majority allow medical use. Yet, federal agencies continue to arrest, detain, and prosecute individuals for cannabis-related offenses, often at great financial cost and with minimal impact on public safety.

The lawmakers highlight specific inefficiencies such as:

- Incarceration of elderly or terminally ill cannabis patients
- Detention for minor technical violations of parole or probation related to cannabis use
- Deployment of federal law enforcement resources for low-level cannabis possession cases

The letter argues that these enforcement actions divert resources away from more serious crimes and contribute to an overcrowded and costly federal detention system.

DOGE Under Scrutiny: Letter Accuses Department of Government Efficiency of Ignoring Reform Proposals

In addition to addressing President Trump directly, the letter calls out the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which is currently led by Elon Musk. Warren and Stansbury accuse the department of overlooking several policy recommendations that were previously submitted, including the suggestion to eliminate federal cannabis arrests.

DOGE, created during Trump's second term to root out waste in government operations, has been a lightning rod for criticism. According to the letter, the department has thus far failed to address entrenched inefficiencies or act on cost-saving proposals from lawmakers and oversight bodies.

The lawmakers suggest that the department's inaction undermines its mandate and that meaningful cost reductions must begin with politically difficult but fiscally necessary changes—like those related to criminal justice and drug policy.

Proposed Broader Reforms Span Healthcare, Defense, Education, and IT Procurement

While cannabis policy is a centerpiece of the letter, Warren and Stansbury present a sweeping vision for reducing government spending. Their proposals include:

- **Cracking down on healthcare profiteering**, particularly in federally subsidized programs
- **Renegotiating Department of Defense contracts** to curb cost overruns and inflated contractor fees
- **Reforming federal education spending** by eliminating underperforming or duplicative programs
- **Closing tax code loopholes** that allow large corporations and high-income earners to avoid paying a fair share
- **Ending vendor-lock practices** in government IT procurement to promote competition and innovation

Each of these measures, the lawmakers argue, would create substantial long-term savings while improving the effectiveness and fairness of government operations.

Cannabis Reform as Fiscal and Social Justice Imperative in a New Political Landscape

Warren and Stansbury position cannabis reform not just as a matter of fiscal prudence but also of equity and justice. They note that federal cannabis laws disproportionately impact marginalized communities, clog the justice system, and undermine public trust in law enforcement.

The lawmakers' appeal reflects growing bipartisan support for cannabis reform, as well as mounting pressure to modernize federal drug policy in line with public sentiment and state law.

Though the Trump administration has not yet responded to the letter, the request adds momentum to a nationwide debate about the future of cannabis enforcement—and whether continued federal prohibition is economically justifiable or politically sustainable.

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