

Cannabis Banking Bill Paused as GOP Prioritizes Other Issues

Senator Leading Cannabis Banking Bill Says Discussions Are on Hold Until Fall as Congress Focuses on Budget Legislation

The long-anticipated progress on federal marijuana banking reform has encountered yet another delay, with Senator Bernie Moreno (R-OH), the incoming sponsor of the Secure and Fair Enforcement Regulation (SAFER) Banking Act, confirming that action on the bill is not currently a priority. Instead, he indicates that discussions around advancing the legislation are likely to resume in the fall.

Sen. Moreno, a freshman Republican, told Marijuana Moment this week that the legislation is not on the current legislative agenda due to more pressing congressional matters, specifically budget reconciliation and appropriations negotiations tied to the so-called “Big Beautiful Bill.” He emphasized that the SAFER Banking Act is something to revisit “tomorrow,” not today.

Marijuana Banking Reform Remains Stalled Despite Past Momentum and Repeated Legislative Approvals

The SAFER Banking Act aims to address a persistent challenge in the cannabis industry: the lack of access to traditional financial services due to the conflict between state-level legalization and federal prohibition. Despite cannabis being legal in dozens of states for medical or adult-use purposes, federal laws have made it difficult for cannabis businesses to open bank accounts, access loans, or accept card payments, forcing many to operate as cash-only entities.

While the legislation has passed the House of Representatives multiple times in recent years with bipartisan support, it has yet to receive a full vote on the Senate floor. A version of the bill cleared the Senate Banking Committee in 2023, raising hopes for progress. However, action stalled as priorities shifted and partisan divides deepened.

Republican Control of Congress and Shifting Legislative Focus Clouds Path Forward for Cannabis Reform

With Republicans now controlling both chambers of Congress, and many key leaders opposed to cannabis legalization, the path forward for any form of federal marijuana reform is murky. Even legislation like the SAFER Banking Act, which enjoys some bipartisan support and is viewed by industry stakeholders as a basic public safety measure, faces hurdles in a polarized political environment.

Senator Moreno’s statement that he is unlikely to revisit the bill until after budget-related legislation is passed underscores these difficulties. His comment that discussion will “hopefully” resume in the fall leaves the bill’s future uncertain, dependent on the resolution of competing legislative priorities.

Cannabis Industry Continues to Urge Action on Banking Reform as Safety and Growth Concerns Persist

For cannabis business owners and investors, the continued delay is both frustrating and financially consequential. The cash-heavy nature of the industry not only complicates operations but also increases the risk of theft, robbery, and tax complications. Advocates have long argued that banking reform is essential for industry stability, transparency, and safety.

The cannabis sector's economic impact is expanding, with billions of dollars in sales generated annually and thousands of jobs created. However, limited access to financial services remains a critical bottleneck, affecting growth, innovation, and fair competition.

House Sponsors Signal Support, But No Immediate Action on the SAFER Banking Act Expected

Rep. Dave Joyce (R-OH), the bill's lead sponsor in the House, has indicated support for reintroducing the SAFER Banking Act during the current session. However, his office previously cautioned that the bill's introduction was "not imminent," a sentiment that now appears consistent with Moreno's timeline.

It remains unclear whether the House and Senate sponsors are aligned in strategy or timing. When contacted by Marijuana Moment for comment on Moreno's recent remarks, Rep. Joyce's office did not provide an immediate response.

Speculation Over Cannabis Banking Being Tied to Other Legislation Fails to Materialize

In recent months, there was speculation that cannabis banking reform could be inserted into other moving legislative packages, such as a cryptocurrency regulation bill advancing in the Senate. However, that effort ultimately failed to materialize, and no cannabis-related provisions were included in the final bill.

Opposition from some GOP lawmakers and lack of coordination across chambers likely contributed to the missed opportunity, reinforcing concerns about political will and legislative bandwidth.

Cannabis Banking Issue Featured Prominently in Hearings and Federal Reports Throughout 2024

Despite the lack of legislative movement, cannabis banking has remained a subject of discussion in Washington. In March, the topic was raised during several congressional hearings, including one by the Senate Banking Committee that addressed broader issues around "debanking."

Lawmakers from both parties acknowledged the unique challenges faced by the marijuana industry, which remains in regulatory limbo as a result of the federal-state disconnect. In January, congressional researchers also released a report that specifically highlighted how the cannabis industry's struggles with banking access lie at the intersection of federal drug laws and state-level legalization policies.

Federal Agencies Continue to Investigate Cannabis Business Banking Barriers Amid Inaction in Congress

While lawmakers debate the SAFER Banking Act, federal agencies are taking steps to better understand the impact of financial exclusion on the cannabis industry. In December, the Government Accountability Office

(GAO) announced it was convening focus groups made up of cannabis entrepreneurs to hear directly about their experiences navigating the financial system without access to insured banking services.

These focus groups are expected to provide key insights to lawmakers and regulators and may influence future legislation or regulatory reforms—even in the absence of congressional action this year.

Longstanding Frustrations Reignite as Critics Point to Missed Opportunities and Weak Political Will

The lack of legislative progress has reignited criticism from both sides of the aisle. Democratic senators such as Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and John Hickenlooper (D-CO) have voiced skepticism about whether there is genuine GOP support for marijuana banking reform.

Warren has accused Republican lawmakers of overstating their commitment to the issue, while Hickenlooper recently argued that the primary barrier is a lack of Republican votes in the Senate. He added that if President Donald Trump is serious about his campaign trail endorsements of cannabis banking and rescheduling, he needs to actively encourage more Republican senators to support the legislation.

Political Dynamics Continue to Shift, But Clear Support for Cannabis Banking Remains Elusive

Although former President Trump has made public statements supporting marijuana banking access and even federal rescheduling, he has remained largely silent on the issue since re-entering office. Meanwhile, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) has a consistent record of opposing cannabis reform, further dampening hopes for swift action in the House.

The political chessboard remains complex. With the 2024 election cycle looming, it's unclear whether cannabis banking will gain traction as a bipartisan issue or remain sidelined by more pressing political fights.

Economic Forecasts Suggest Cannabis Banking Reform Would Bring Billions in Federally Insured Deposits

On the one-year anniversary of the SAFER Banking Act's approval by the Senate Banking Committee in September 2023, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released an analysis estimating that the legislation would result in billions of dollars in new federally insured deposits from cannabis businesses.

This economic argument has added weight to calls for reform, as financial institutions like JPMorgan Chase have expressed interest in serving cannabis businesses—if federal legal protections are established. Without congressional action, however, those partnerships remain on hold.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +855-507-2622

© Copyright 2025 Cannabis Risk Manager. All Rights Reserved