

Florida Cannabis Campaign Nears 70% of Needed 2026 Signatures

Florida Cannabis Legalization Campaign Reaches 70 Percent of Signature Goal

Smart and Safe Florida Makes Major Progress Toward Qualifying 2026 Ballot Initiative

A major effort to legalize marijuana for adult use in Florida is steadily advancing toward its goal of making the 2026 ballot. The campaign, led by Smart & Safe Florida, has now gathered nearly 70 percent of the required valid signatures necessary to qualify the initiative for voter consideration.

According to the latest update from the Florida Division of Elections, the campaign has collected 613,214 verified signatures, closing in on the 880,062 required to secure official placement on the statewide ballot in 2026. This achievement marks a crucial milestone for the pro-legalization movement, especially after the campaign's earlier 2024 initiative failed to clear the steep 60 percent voter approval threshold.

2024 Ballot Initiative Failed to Pass Despite Widespread Support and Funding

Smart & Safe Florida previously secured a spot on the 2024 ballot with a similar proposal, backed by significant industry support, including tens of millions in contributions from companies such as Trulieve, a major multi-state cannabis operator. However, despite a strong showing of support from voters, the initiative failed to achieve the required supermajority for constitutional amendments in Florida.

In the aftermath of that defeat, the group promptly refiled a revised initiative in early 2025, aiming to improve clarity, address legal criticisms, and better position the proposal for electoral success in the upcoming 2026 cycle.

Legal and Economic Implications Will Now Be Examined Under State Law

With more than 600,000 signatures already verified, Smart & Safe Florida has reached another procedural milestone that triggers a mandatory review of the initiative. Under Florida law, once a ballot proposal crosses a specific signature threshold, the Florida Supreme Court and other relevant state agencies must review the language for constitutional compliance and assess its potential fiscal impact on the state.

This review will help determine the measure's eligibility to appear on the ballot and will provide voters with an analysis of the initiative's economic implications, including tax revenues and regulatory costs associated with implementing legalization.

Governor and State Leaders Suggest the 2026 Initiative May Face Judicial Rejection

Despite the campaign's signature-gathering progress, state leaders continue to express skepticism about the initiative's future. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has publicly indicated that the measure is unlikely to survive judicial scrutiny by the state's highest court.

While DeSantis had previously predicted correctly that the 2024 version would survive legal challenges, he now believes the current proposal includes problematic language that may result in disqualification. This assessment adds uncertainty to an already complex process, as legal clarity remains one of the most significant hurdles for citizen-led constitutional amendments in Florida.

New Provisions Clarify Limits on Public Consumption and Legislative Oversight

To improve the measure's chances of passing both judicial review and voter approval, Smart & Safe Florida incorporated several strategic revisions to the initiative's language. These include:

- An explicit ban on smoking or vaping marijuana in public places, addressing public health and order concerns.
- Provisions requiring the state legislature to regulate the time, place, and manner of public consumption.
- Clearer definitions of who may participate in the legalized market and how the cannabis industry would be regulated under the constitutional amendment.

These additions appear to respond directly to the criticisms voiced by opponents during the 2024 campaign, particularly concerns about the scope of legalization and regulatory oversight.

Petition Threshold Must Be Met in at Least Half of Florida's Congressional Districts

While Smart & Safe Florida is making steady progress toward the statewide signature requirement, the campaign must also meet a district-specific threshold. Florida law mandates that at least 8 percent of voters in 14 out of the state's 28 congressional districts must also sign the petition.

So far, the campaign has surpassed this benchmark in only three districts, although it is reportedly close to meeting the requirement in several others. The district-level challenge adds another layer of complexity to the qualification process, demanding a geographically broad and well-coordinated signature collection effort.

Some Surveys Show Strong Bipartisan Backing, While Others Indicate Falling Short of 60 Percent

The debate over marijuana legalization in Florida remains contentious, with recent polls painting conflicting pictures of public opinion. One poll released in early 2025 indicated 67 percent support for legalization among likely voters, including broad bipartisan approval across Democrats, independents, and moderate Republicans.

However, another survey conducted by the Florida Chamber of Commerce, which opposes legalization, showed only 53 percent support, well below the 60 percent threshold needed to amend the state constitution.

These disparities highlight the importance of voter education, targeted messaging, and high turnout among supporters to ensure a successful outcome in 2026.

Recently Signed Legislation Adds Barriers to the Ballot Initiative Process

In the background of the cannabis campaign's growing momentum, Florida lawmakers recently passed legislation that imposes stricter rules on citizen initiatives. A GOP-sponsored bill, signed into law by Governor DeSantis, introduces new requirements that could make it harder for campaigns like Smart & Safe Florida to qualify future initiatives.

Critics argue that these changes are designed to limit direct democracy and restrict the ability of voters to decide major policy issues. Supporters claim the reforms are necessary to ensure transparency and accountability in the initiative process.

Regardless, the new law may represent an additional obstacle to marijuana legalization efforts moving forward.

Trump Previously Backed 2024 Measure but Remains Silent on Latest Effort

During the 2024 campaign, former President Donald Trump endorsed the marijuana legalization initiative, signaling a surprising departure from the traditional GOP stance. His endorsement followed meetings with cannabis industry leaders, including the CEO of Trulieve.

However, Trump has remained silent on cannabis policy in recent months, and members of his party have expressed skepticism. A Florida GOP senator even claimed that the 2024 campaign misled Trump and the public regarding the measure's true content.

Despite Trump's absence from the current debate, the possibility of future support could shift momentum depending on how the campaign and public opinion evolve over the next year.

DeSantis Signs Bill Authorizing State to Cancel Registrations for Drug Offenders

In a separate move related to Florida's cannabis policy, Governor DeSantis recently signed SB 2514, a budget bill that includes provisions affecting medical marijuana patients. The legislation authorizes the Florida Department of Health to revoke the registrations of patients and caregivers who are convicted of or plead guilty to drug-related crimes.

This policy change could have significant implications for thousands of registered medical cannabis users across the state and may spark legal challenges or advocacy efforts to protect patients' rights.

2026 Vote May Set New Precedents for Drug Policy and Citizen Participation

As the 2026 ballot initiative moves closer to reality, Florida remains a focal point in the national conversation about marijuana reform. With the potential for record-setting voter turnout, shifting political dynamics, and intense public debate, the next 18 months will be crucial in determining whether adult-use legalization finally becomes law in one of the nation's most populous states.

For now, Smart & Safe Florida continues its campaign with renewed focus and growing grassroots support, hoping to turn signatures into votes and bring regulated cannabis to the Sunshine State.

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