

# Oregon Advances Plan to Legalize Cannabis Social Lounges

## Oregon Inches Closer to Cannabis Lounges as Ballot Title Is Issued for 2026 Initiative

### *Campaign to Legalize Cannabis Social Lounges Receives Draft Ballot Title from State Attorney General's Office*

A bold step toward reshaping Oregon's cannabis culture was taken this week as a campaign to legalize cannabis consumption lounges cleared a key procedural hurdle. On Wednesday, state officials issued a draft ballot title and summary for the Oregon Cannabis Social Lounge Act, a proposed initiative that would legalize cannabis lounges open to the public for social consumption.

The initiative is spearheaded by the Oregon Cannabis Cafe Coalition (OCCC), a Portland-based group advocating for designated spaces where adults can consume cannabis products in a social setting. With this development, organizers move one step closer to launching a statewide signature collection drive in hopes of qualifying the measure for the November 2026 general election.

### **Signatures Verified, Public Comment Period Begins**

To reach this point, the campaign first needed to submit at least 1,000 verified signatures from registered Oregon voters. In June, the group submitted over 1,400 signatures. The Oregon Secretary of State's Elections Division verified those earlier this month, triggering a response from the State Attorney General's office, which released the draft ballot title and summary on Wednesday.

The next deadline in the process is August 6, when the public comment period ends. If no challenges are filed, the campaign can proceed to broader signature gathering, which OCCC hopes to begin in September.

Justyce Seith, OCCC's founder and the initiative's chief petitioner, expressed optimism in a recent email: "The progress of the campaign is going much better than anticipated. We are very excited for the challenges coming up."

Seith also confirmed that campaign leaders will speak at the upcoming City of Portland Cannabis Policy Oversight Team (CPOT) meeting on September 11 to further discuss the initiative and its broader social and economic implications.

### **Draft Ballot Title Summary: Public Cannabis Lounges and Local Oversight**

According to the Attorney General's draft, the measure would allow microbusinesses to operate cannabis lounges open to the public, where adults 21 and older can bring their own cannabis for consumption. The Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission (OLCC) would be tasked with developing a licensing process and

ensuring regulatory oversight.

Notably, cannabis retail dispensaries would not be eligible to operate lounges under the same business name or entity. Also, lounges would not be permitted to sell cannabis on-site, though they could sell non-cannabis food, beverages, and CBD products if they meet local health certification requirements. The sale and use of alcohol and tobacco would be prohibited within these venues.

The proposal emphasizes the need for public health education, requiring the OLCC to work with health authorities to create educational materials and outreach programs about cannabis consumption lounges and their purpose.

## **Building Momentum: Funding, Volunteers, and Community Support**

With the legal groundwork nearly complete, the next major focus for OCCC is resource mobilization. Seith and the campaign are actively seeking donations, volunteers, and partnerships to support signature gathering, billboard campaigns, web development, and community events to boost awareness.

## **Key Provisions: What the Cannabis Lounge Measure Would Do**

The proposed measure lays out a detailed framework for the establishment and operation of cannabis lounges in Oregon:

- **Eligibility:** Only state-recognized cannabis microbusinesses would be allowed to apply for a lounge license.
- **Consumption Rules:** Adults would be allowed to smoke, vape, or consume non-edible cannabis products on-site, but on-premises cannabis sales would be prohibited.
- **Operating Hours:** Lounges would need to close by 2:00 a.m. daily.
- **Public Education:** Lounges must post signs and visual aids to inform patrons of cannabis consumption risks and rules.
- **Regulatory Oversight:** The OLCC would establish licensing criteria, inspection procedures, and penalties for violations.
- **Local Control:** Municipalities could regulate the number of lounges and impose additional restrictions, but the petition is vague about whether cities and counties would have the power to impose complete bans.

## **Social Impact: A Designated Safe Space for Cannabis Consumption**

Advocates argue that legal cannabis lounges are long overdue in Oregon, where public consumption remains illegal despite widespread legalization. Without such venues, cannabis consumers often have no legal space to consume, especially those who live in rental housing or public housing, where smoking is prohibited.

The initiative's backers believe lounges would offer a safe and controlled environment for consumption—particularly for tourists and those without access to private consumption spaces—while also reducing instances of public cannabis use.

“These lounges will operate in a manner that ensures public health and safety, while providing adult-use cannabis consumers with a designated space to enjoy cannabis in social settings,” the petition states.

## **Legal Timeline and Future Outlook**

If the campaign clears the upcoming public comment period without legal challenge, it will need to collect at least 117,173 valid signatures from registered Oregon voters by the state deadline to qualify the initiative for the 2026 general election.

Should voters approve the measure, the act would take effect on January 1, 2027, marking a significant milestone in Oregon's evolving cannabis policy landscape.

## **Wider Legal Landscape: Surveillance and Policy Criticism in Oregon**

This ballot development comes as Oregon's broader cannabis policy continues to face scrutiny. Earlier this month, the Oregon Court of Appeals issued a strong rebuke to state police for using warrantless, technologically-enhanced surveillance in an investigation into an illicit grow operation, raising privacy concerns and further illustrating the need for consistent, transparent regulation across the board.

## **Grassroots Movement with Growing Momentum**

The Oregon Cannabis Cafe Coalition has taken a crucial step toward normalizing cannabis consumption through regulated social spaces. While the road to the 2026 ballot is still long—and likely to involve legal, political, and logistical challenges, the campaign's early momentum, combined with broadening public support for responsible cannabis reform, could make Oregon a national pioneer in social-use cannabis legislation.

For now, all eyes will be on the public comment period deadline on August 6, after which the campaign can enter its most critical phase: the push to collect more than 117,000 signatures to bring the matter to the voters.

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