

Former HUD Secretary Slams Cannabis Reform as National Threat

Former Trump Cabinet Member Warns Cannabis Rescheduling Could Help “Destroy This Country”

On September 9, 2025, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson voiced strong opposition to the Biden administration’s consideration of marijuana rescheduling, framing the proposal as a dangerous step that could undermine American society. In a Monday interview with Fox Business, Carson argued that moving cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act would contribute to rising crime, weaken communities, and empower foreign adversaries. His comments highlight the deep political and cultural divide still surrounding marijuana reform, even as public opinion and state-level laws increasingly favor legalization.

Carson’s Warning Against Cannabis Rescheduling

Carson, who served under former President Donald Trump, has long been a vocal critic of marijuana policy reform. During his Fox Business appearance, he insisted that marijuana’s risks are too great to justify a shift in federal classification. He cited what he described as studies showing dramatic increases in crime around dispensaries and warned that today’s cannabis products are significantly more potent than those used in past decades.

According to Carson, rescheduling would not simply be a neutral administrative decision but a turning point in what he called “life and death issues.” He suggested that policymakers were trying too hard to appease competing constituencies and urged them to reject compromise, claiming that the stakes are too high.

Carson went further, arguing that America’s “enemies” are using marijuana reform to their advantage, pointing to Chinese cartels allegedly taking advantage of cannabis markets. He claimed that widespread normalization of marijuana would leave the country vulnerable, saying, “If I were trying to destroy this country, I would love to get a large proportion of the population just asking for the drugs and their check.”

What Rescheduling Would Actually Mean

Carson’s warnings contrast sharply with what rescheduling to Schedule III would actually accomplish. The move would not federally legalize cannabis, nor would it create a free market for recreational sales nationwide. Instead, rescheduling would recognize marijuana’s medical use and relax some of the most restrictive barriers associated with Schedule I classification.

For businesses, the most significant change would involve taxation. Under current law, IRS code 280E prevents marijuana companies from taking standard tax deductions, a rule that places heavy financial burdens on state-licensed businesses. A shift to Schedule III would allow deductions, making the industry more economically viable.

Additionally, rescheduling would improve research opportunities, as Schedule I drugs are subject to the strictest research restrictions. Medical studies on marijuana could expand, potentially deepening scientific understanding of its therapeutic benefits and risks. However, criminal penalties for non-medical use under federal law would remain in place.

Carson's Record and Shift in Tone

Carson's strong opposition to marijuana rescheduling represents a sharp contrast with some of his past remarks. Nearly a decade ago, he criticized the harsh effects of drug enforcement policies on disadvantaged communities, acknowledging the disproportionate burden of criminalization. His current stance, however, focuses heavily on the dangers he associates with marijuana availability, echoing a more traditional "tough on drugs" message.

The shift reflects broader divisions within the Republican Party and conservative circles, where debates about marijuana policy often split between those who see reform as inevitable and those who view it as a cultural and security threat.

A Divided Trump Circle on Cannabis Reform

Carson is not alone in voicing opposition, but his warning comes amid mixed signals from other prominent figures aligned with former President Trump. Sean Spicer, Trump's former press secretary, has also spoken cautiously about rescheduling, while longtime Trump ally Roger Stone has argued in favor of reform, publishing an op-ed in support of the change.

Outside of political advisors, cultural figures have entered the conversation as well. Retired boxing champion Mike Tyson has become one of the loudest voices urging federal rescheduling and legalization. He has appeared on Fox News and podcasts to make his case directly to Trump and has organized letters alongside athletes and celebrities calling for reform. Tyson has framed marijuana as not only a medical issue but also an economic opportunity and a matter of fairness for those convicted under past cannabis laws.

Meanwhile, former senior advisor Kellyanne Conway is reportedly one of the most vocal supporters of marijuana rescheduling inside Trump's political circle, according to a GOP lawmaker familiar with internal discussions.

The Broader Policy Landscape

Carson's remarks come as marijuana reform continues to evolve rapidly at the state and federal levels. As of 2025, dozens of states have legalized medical marijuana, and many have embraced full recreational use. Public opinion polls consistently show majority support for legalization nationwide, with younger voters especially supportive.

At the federal level, however, progress has been slow. While rescheduling represents a significant symbolic and practical step, it falls short of the full legalization that advocates have long sought. For opponents like Carson, even incremental change is too much, reflecting lingering fears about drug use, crime, and cultural decline. For supporters, rescheduling is a necessary first step toward dismantling outdated prohibition

policies and addressing the harms of decades-long criminalization.

The Stakes Moving Forward

Carson's framing of marijuana rescheduling as a national security threat underscores how emotionally and politically charged the debate remains. His warnings about crime, potency, and foreign influence reflect concerns held by many opponents of cannabis reform, even as evidence on the issue remains contested.

Whether or not the administration moves forward with rescheduling, the debate highlights the collision between evolving social attitudes and deeply entrenched skepticism among some policymakers. As former Trump officials like Carson and Conway take opposing sides, the conversation around marijuana reform is becoming not just a policy debate, but a defining cultural and political fault line for the years ahead.

How the administration balances these competing voices and how voters respond may shape not only marijuana policy but broader discussions of public health, criminal justice, and economic opportunity in the United States.

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