

Missouri Campaign Seeks Unified Cannabis Market for 2026 Ballot

Missouri Activists File 2026 Ballot Initiatives to Unify Cannabis and Hemp Regulations

A Missouri advocacy group has filed four versions of a proposed constitutional amendment that would dramatically reshape the state's cannabis industry by merging marijuana and hemp into a single regulatory framework. The initiatives, submitted on September 9, 2025, seek to replace existing constitutional provisions with a system that activists say would eliminate monopolistic practices, establish fair licensing rules, and grant lawmakers more authority to refine cannabis policy in the years ahead.

A Push to Eliminate the Divide Between Hemp and Cannabis

The campaign, organized under the banner *Missourians for a Single Market*, argues that current laws create unnecessary barriers between hemp and marijuana businesses. The measures seek to establish parity between the two industries by standardizing licensing systems, reducing regulatory burdens, and allowing lawmakers to make future adjustments through statutory changes rather than constitutional amendments.

Eapen Thampy, the lead petitioner for the effort, framed the proposal as a corrective to what he called undue influence from entrenched marijuana industry players. "Opposition from marijuana monopoly interests has blocked the pathway for reasonable legislation to regulate hemp," Thampy said in a press release. "The Single Market Amendment seeks to end the monopoly and create a free and regulated market without favoritism."

The Initiative Filing Process and Signature Gathering

With the measures now filed, Missouri's secretary of state will conduct a 50-day review before certifying the language. Once approved, campaigners will begin collecting signatures this fall. To qualify for the November 2026 ballot, activists must gather roughly 300,000 signatures, with at least 180,000 validated and evenly distributed across the state's congressional districts.

That process, however, could be complicated by proposals under consideration in a special legislative session. One measure would redraw Missouri's congressional map to favor Republicans, while another would require ballot initiatives to win majority support in each congressional district to pass statewide a significant new hurdle for citizen-led campaigns.

Provisions of the Single Market Amendment

Each of the four submitted versions shares a common goal but contains unique policy differences. Among the consistent features:

- **Licensing and Market Rules:** Lawmakers would be barred from limiting the number of cannabis licenses, imposing stricter geographic restrictions than those used for alcohol or tobacco, or setting higher licensing fees than those charged to liquor retailers.
- **Possession and Purchase Limits:** Adults would face no limits on cannabis possession or purchase amounts.
- **Home Grow and Direct Sales:** Adults could not only cultivate cannabis at home but also sell it directly to other consumers or retailers, provided products undergo testing.
- **Medical Access:** Individuals could self-certify as medical marijuana patients.
- **Criminal Justice Reform:** The proposals mandate expungement pathways for certain cannabis convictions and retroactive tax relief for businesses impacted by the federal 280E tax code.

Differences Between the Four Versions

The most notable differences between the four proposals concern taxation and regulatory oversight of hemp-derived beverages.

- **Two Versions:** Impose an 11 percent cannabis tax for the first decade, with revenues allocated to veterans' health programs. After that, a per-dose equivalency tax model would apply, ensuring rates remain comparable to alcohol.
- **Two Versions:** Adopt the alcohol parity tax model immediately upon enactment.
- **Regulatory Authority:** Some versions assign lawmakers responsibility for setting rules on hemp THC beverages by modeling alcohol regulations.

Divisions Within the Cannabis Industry

Not all stakeholders support the initiative. The Missouri Cannabis Trade Association (MoCannTrade) has voiced strong opposition, arguing the proposal would effectively repeal the voter-approved legalization laws passed in 2018 and 2022.

Andrew Mullins, MoCannTrade's executive director, argued that the new amendment threatens a thriving marijuana market that generated \$241 million in state and local tax revenue last year. "Drastically changing the state's cannabis policy would be a spectacular failure," Mullins warned, claiming the push is being funded by "bad actors" in the hemp industry who currently sell unregulated cannabis products.

He cautioned that the proposal could strip funding from local governments, veterans' programs, and the justice system, undermining one of the most successful regulated marijuana markets in the country.

Missouri's Hemp Market and Ongoing Enforcement

The push for a unified cannabis system comes amid heightened tensions between hemp businesses and state regulators. Earlier this year, Missouri's attorney general issued cease-and-desist letters to more than a dozen hemp retailers accused of selling intoxicating products such as THCA outside the marijuana program.

Lawmakers have wrestled with proposals to set THC limits for hemp-derived products, including efforts to allow low-dose beverages in grocery and liquor stores. While committees in both chambers advanced legislation earlier this year, the measures ultimately stalled before reaching the governor's desk.

What Comes Next for the Single Market Amendment

With the filing now complete, the campaign must decide which version of the proposal to advance before launching its signature drive. The effort faces potential obstacles from both the legislature and well-funded opponents in the marijuana industry, but activists insist the amendment is necessary to prevent regulatory favoritism and ensure equal footing for hemp and marijuana businesses.

If the initiative makes the ballot, Missouri voters could be asked in 2026 to make a defining choice about the future of cannabis regulation in the state between preserving the current marijuana-focused system or adopting a single, unified cannabis market.

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