

Could 2025 Be the Year Wisconsin Legalizes Medical Cannabis?

Wisconsin Republicans Introduce Medical Cannabis Bill but Admit Passage Is Unlikely

Wisconsin Could Become the 41st State to Legalize Medical Marijuana if the Bill Succeeds

Wisconsin would join 40 other states in legalizing medical cannabis if a newly introduced Republican-backed proposal becomes law. The bill, unveiled Monday, seeks to create a tightly regulated medical marijuana program but faces long odds in the GOP-controlled legislature despite restrictive provisions and limits on cannabis access.

Proposal Introduced by Republican Leaders Aims to Provide a Medical Option for Patients

The legislation, introduced by Republican Senate President Mary Felzkowski, state Sen. Patrick Testin, and state Rep. Patrick Snyder, marks a rare GOP effort to advance medical marijuana in the state. A sponsorship memo stated, “Medicine is never one-size-fits-all, and it is time for Wisconsin to join the majority of the country in adding another option, which may help patients find the relief they need.”

If enacted, the bill would allow patients diagnosed with serious conditions such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, PTSD, or severe chronic pain to access medical cannabis with a physician’s recommendation. A new **Office of Medical Cannabis Regulation** would oversee licensing, business operations, and patient registration.

Strict Rules Would Limit Products and Ban Smokeable Cannabis

Unlike broader proposals in other states, the Wisconsin measure prohibits smoking cannabis. Instead, permitted products would include concentrates, oils, tinctures, edibles, pills, topical treatments, gels, creams, vapors, patches, liquids, or cannabis administered via a nebulizer.

Dispensaries would be required to employ a licensed pharmacist, who would determine daily dosages for patients in coordination with the prescribing physician. Additionally, dispensaries would face strict advertising bans, with only limited exceptions.

Private Cannabis Businesses Allowed but With Licensing and Residency Restrictions

In contrast to an earlier failed Republican proposal that would have relied on state-run dispensaries, the new bill allows private businesses to operate cultivation, processing, and retail facilities. The legislation places no cap on the number of licensed businesses but does set fees: \$10,000 for processors and cultivators, and \$5,000 for dispensaries and testing labs.

Ownership restrictions mandate that at least 80% of principal officers must be Wisconsin residents. Home cultivation, however, would not be permitted under the proposed law. Notably, medical cannabis sales would not be subject to state sales taxes.

Cannabis Reform Popular Among Wisconsin Voters but Repeatedly Blocked by Lawmakers

Polls show overwhelming public support for cannabis reform in Wisconsin. A **2024 Marquette Law School survey** found that 83% of respondents favored medical marijuana legalization, while 63% backed recreational use. Despite this, state lawmakers have repeatedly blocked reform efforts.

Earlier this year, Republicans removed marijuana legalization provisions from Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' budget proposal. In 2023, the legislature also rejected Evers' separate legalization bill. GOP lawmakers additionally rejected a Republican-sponsored medical marijuana measure in 2024 that would have limited sales to state-run dispensaries.

Republican Sponsors Admit Chances of Passage Remain Slim

Even the bill's sponsors acknowledge the steep uphill battle the measure faces. "Passing MMJ in Wisconsin will take a pretty gigantic Hail Mary," Rep. Patrick Snyder told WISN, admitting that advancing the legislation through the Assembly will be challenging.

Sen. Felzkowski and Sen. Testin echoed similar concerns, noting that while the compromise bill is designed to appeal to more conservative lawmakers, strong opposition to cannabis remains within the Republican caucus.

Wisconsin Still an Outlier as Surrounding States Move Ahead With Cannabis Reform

Wisconsin remains the only state in the Great Lakes region without legal medical or recreational cannabis. Its neighbors—Illinois and Minnesota—have fully legal adult-use markets, while Iowa allows limited medical marijuana.

Despite growing regional momentum, Wisconsin lawmakers remain divided. Meanwhile, Republicans are simultaneously advancing legislation to restrict hemp-derived THC products, which have surged in popularity due to the state's lack of broader cannabis laws.

Wisconsin Faces Pressure but Cannabis Reform Remains a Longshot

The latest Republican-backed bill reflects shifting attitudes within the party and growing recognition of public demand for medical marijuana access. However, years of failed attempts highlight how difficult it remains to change cannabis policy in Wisconsin. While neighboring states continue to expand their markets, Wisconsin patients and businesses may once again be left waiting as lawmakers debate the future of cannabis reform in the state.

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