

Missouri Targets Hemp Derived THC Drinks in New Crackdown

Missouri's Attorney General Targets Hemp Derived THC Beverages for Crackdown

Missouri's newly appointed attorney general, Catherine Hanaway, has announced plans to pursue enforcement actions against the state's rapidly expanding hemp-derived THC beverage market. Hanaway, who took office last month, has made the regulation of intoxicating hemp products one of her administration's early priorities.

According to her office, the focus is on safeguarding public health and addressing what officials describe as an unregulated and potentially unsafe industry. The attorney general's team has indicated it will use all available legal authority to pursue measures against untested and unregulated hemp-based products circulating in the state.

Although detailed plans have yet to be released, Hanaway's stance signals the first major step by Missouri's top legal office to confront hemp THC beverages, which have grown in popularity across the state.

Missouri's Hemp Beverage Market Faces Uncertain Future Amid Lack of Regulation

Hemp-derived THC beverages have become one of the fastest-growing product categories in the U.S. cannabis sector. Retailers including major convenience chains and grocery stores have begun stocking THC-infused seltzers and tonics, appealing to consumers seeking mild intoxicating effects without purchasing from licensed marijuana dispensaries.

In Missouri, the market has operated without clear regulatory oversight. No laws currently establish age restrictions or testing requirements for hemp-based intoxicating products. Efforts to pass legislation earlier this year that would have imposed rules similar to those governing marijuana failed after facing opposition from business owners and hemp advocates.

The proposed bill sought to confine the sale of THC edibles, vapes, and beverages to licensed dispensaries, effectively excluding most mainstream retailers. The proposal stalled amid debate over whether hemp-derived cannabinoids should be treated the same as marijuana products.

Retailers Voluntarily Adopt Safeguards in Absence of State Oversight

In the absence of state regulation, many Missouri distributors and retailers have adopted self-imposed rules modeled after alcohol sales. These include age verification requirements for buyers and voluntary product testing for potency and contaminants.

While these practices have helped some businesses maintain consumer trust, they remain unenforceable and inconsistent across the state. As a result, Hanaway's office views the hemp beverage sector as a public health risk, particularly concerning youth access and product quality.

Economic Potential of Hemp THC Beverages Remains Strong Despite Legal Challenges

Despite looming enforcement, the hemp THC beverage sector continues to demonstrate strong market potential. A recent economic analysis estimates that national THC beverage sales could reach between \$9.9 billion and \$14.9 billion annually as the market matures.

In Missouri, the hemp beverage segment alone could generate \$75.4 million in yearly sales, positioning the state as a growing hub for cannabinoid-infused products.

Industry researcher Beau Whitney projects that national THC beverage sales in 2024 ranged between \$1 billion and \$1.3 billion, with hemp-derived products accounting for roughly 76% of total sales. The remaining share came from marijuana dispensaries in regulated states.

Future of Hemp-Derived Products in Missouri Depends on Regulatory Clarity

Missouri's coming months are expected to bring greater scrutiny to hemp-derived intoxicants, as lawmakers and state agencies weigh how to regulate a market that has so far operated in a legal gray area.

For now, the attorney general's pending crackdown may disrupt the state's booming hemp beverage industry, even as economic forecasts highlight its growing consumer demand and profitability.

Unless a comprehensive regulatory framework is established, Missouri businesses face uncertainty over how future enforcement actions will impact product availability, retail partnerships, and consumer access.

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