

# Virginia's New Governor Backs Legal Cannabis Sales

## Virginia's New Governor-Elect Abigail Spanberger Signals Strong Support for Legal Cannabis Sales

### *Election Outcome Paves the Way for Long-Awaited Retail Marijuana Market in the Commonwealth*

Efforts to legalize adult-use marijuana sales in Virginia gained powerful new momentum on Tuesday following the election of Abigail Spanberger as the state's next governor. The Democrat's victory over Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears (R) represents a potential turning point for cannabis reform after years of stalled progress under outgoing Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R), who vetoed legalization bills twice during his term.

### **Spanberger's Election Revives Hopes for a Regulated Cannabis Market**

Virginia legalized personal possession and use of marijuana in 2022, but retail sales remain banned, leaving consumers reliant on the illicit market. The new administration is now expected to prioritize building a safe, transparent, and fair legal retail framework.

"As Virginia takes steps toward creating a legalized retail market for cannabis, we need a clear strategy to set up a market that is safe for consumers, transparent for businesses, and fair to entrepreneurs," Spanberger told *Marijuana Moment* before the election.

She emphasized that revenue from legal cannabis should directly benefit the state's communities, particularly through investments in public education and local development programs.

### **A Contrast to Outgoing Leadership and Opposing Candidates**

Spanberger's pro-legalization position starkly contrasts with that of Gov. Youngkin, whose administration repeatedly blocked cannabis reform bills passed by the legislature.

Her Republican opponent, Winsome Earle-Sears, also opposed legalization, calling marijuana a "gateway drug" during campaign debates. She cited her experience as a business owner, expressing fears over workplace safety and "zero-tolerance" policies for THC use.

Spanberger, on the other hand, drew on her extensive background in law enforcement and national security—having served as a CIA officer and federal agent—to argue that a regulated, transparent cannabis system actually improves safety and accountability.

"It is extraordinarily important that we have transparency and that there is a clear market in order to be enforced," she said.

## **Building on a Record of Cannabis Reform at the Federal Level**

Before her gubernatorial run, Spanberger served in Congress, where she repeatedly supported federal marijuana reform measures. She voted twice in favor of the Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act, which would have federally legalized cannabis and expunged certain prior offenses.

She also cosponsored the Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act, advocating for fair access to banking services for cannabis businesses—a key issue for operators in regulated markets.

Her record includes support for medical cannabis access for veterans, expanded marijuana research, and protection of state cannabis programs from federal interference.

While she has occasionally opposed specific amendments related to research or rescheduling, her overall voting record reflects a consistent pro-reform stance focused on responsible regulation.

## **Virginia Democrats Positioned to Deliver on Cannabis Legalization**

When Spanberger takes office in January, she will do so with a Democratic majority in both legislative chambers, strengthening the likelihood of meaningful progress on marijuana policy in 2025.

“Governor-elect Spanberger’s win finally gives Virginia the long-overdue opportunity to establish a regulated adult-use cannabis market,” said JM Pedini, executive director of *Virginia NORML*. “Legislators have done the work and the public is ready. Now it’s time to deliver a safe, legal marketplace that serves consumers and communities instead of the illicit market.”

The Joint Commission to Oversee the Transition of the Commonwealth into a Cannabis Retail Market has already been laying the groundwork. Its chair, Del. Paul Krizek (D), recently said that the commission expects to finalize draft legislation by December 2025, setting the stage for early action once Spanberger is sworn in.

## **A Turning Point for the Commonwealth’s Cannabis Future**

With Spanberger’s election, Virginia stands on the verge of transforming its fragmented marijuana landscape into a regulated and revenue-generating system.

Her administration is expected to focus on:

- Establishing licensed retail sales for adults.
- Reinforcing public safety and youth protections.
- Directing tax revenue toward education and community reinvestment.
- Supporting entrepreneurs and small cannabis businesses.

As Virginia transitions from prohibition to regulation, Spanberger’s leadership could mark the beginning of a new era of cannabis policy one defined by balance, transparency, and economic opportunity.

Email: [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com) | Phone: +415-226-4060

© Copyright 2025 Cannabis Risk Manager. All Rights Reserved