

U.S. House Approves Spending Bill Continuing Block on D.C. Recreational Marijuana Sales

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a federal spending bill that maintains a provision preventing Washington, D.C. from legalizing regulated recreational marijuana sales. The legislation was approved Wednesday by a 341–79 vote.

The appropriations package for fiscal year 2026 includes language barring the District from using federal or local funds to enact laws allowing recreational cannabis sales, continuing a long-standing congressional rider despite voter approval of marijuana possession and home cultivation in 2014.

The measure also reiterates that marijuana remains illegal under federal law and highlights enhanced penalties for distributing or manufacturing cannabis within 1,000 feet of schools, playgrounds, and other locations frequented by children.

Additionally, an accompanying report directs federal officials to submit a report within 45 days on criminal drug syndicates linked to the People’s Republic of China that are involved in illegal drug production and money laundering in the United States, including activities in Maine, California, and Oregon. While marijuana is not explicitly mentioned, the directive aligns with recent congressional scrutiny of illicit cannabis operations tied to foreign groups.

The rider’s effect could be influenced by potential federal action to reclassify cannabis under the Controlled Substances Act. A 2024 Congressional Research Service report noted that rescheduling marijuana could allow the District to authorize recreational sales under local law, though federal prohibition would remain.

The bill was released days after the House passed separate legislation extending protections for state medical marijuana programs, which now moves to the Senate.

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