

Ohio Governor Pushes for Ban on Public Cannabis Consumption and Delta-8 THC Products

In regard to marijuana, we must respect the will of Ohio voters. However, I doubt if very many people who voted yes on Issue 2 wanted their kids breathing in marijuana smoke while walking in a public park, to sports practice, or to watch a professional baseball game.

That is not...

— Governor Mike DeWine (@GovMikeDeWine)

In his recent State of the State address, Ohio Governor *Mike DeWine*, a Republican, reiterated his call for lawmakers to pass legislation aimed at banning public marijuana consumption and the sale of intoxicating hemp-derived cannabinoids such as delta-8 THC. Governor DeWine emphasized the need to address these issues, citing concerns about public health and safety.

The governor's stance on cannabis regulation is nuanced. While he acknowledges the voters' approval of marijuana legalization, he emphasizes the importance of respecting the wishes of Ohioans who may not want to encounter cannabis smoke in public spaces. He expressed doubt that those who voted for legalization intended for their children to be exposed to marijuana smoke in places like parks, sidewalks, or sports arenas.

DeWine's concerns extend beyond public consumption to the sale of delta-8 THC and similar products, which he describes as "widely unregulated" and readily available to children in gas stations and convenience stores. He highlighted the risks associated with these substances, including hallucinations, vomiting, tremors, anxiety, and loss of consciousness. Urging the General Assembly to take action, he called for legislation to ban the sale of these products to minors.

While DeWine has previously expressed interest in expediting adult-use cannabis sales, his recent address did not emphasize this aspect. Instead, his focus was on addressing public health and safety concerns associated with cannabis consumption and the availability of certain cannabinoid products.

However, the path to legislative action on these issues is not straightforward. Despite discussions among legislative leaders about potential changes to cannabis laws, including expediting sales, consensus has been elusive within the GOP-controlled legislature. While the Senate passed an amendment package prior to legalization taking effect, the House has not taken similar action.

Regulatory efforts are also underway, with plans to start issuing cannabis business licenses by September. A GOP lawmaker overseeing rulemaking suggested that sales could commence as early as June under a regulatory plan set for approval.

In the meantime, regulators have already implemented some changes, including waiving fees for medical marijuana patient registrations—a move aimed at facilitating access to medical cannabis.

The debate over cannabis regulation in Ohio reflects broader tensions between respecting voter-approved initiatives and addressing public health and safety concerns. Governor DeWine's call for legislative action

underscores the complexity of navigating these issues and balancing competing interests in cannabis policy.

As Ohio continues to grapple with cannabis regulation, the decisions made by lawmakers and regulators will shape the state's approach to marijuana legalization and its impact on public health, safety, and accessibility.

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