

Turning Over a New Leaf: Democratic Congressman Proposes Fresh Cannabis Agenda Amid Rescheduling Momentum

With the federal government moving to reschedule marijuana, a Democratic congressman has issued a new memo on cannabis reform priorities to reflect renewed “optimism for the path ahead”—laying out suggestions to advance the issue both in Congress and administratively.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer’s Vision

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), founding co-chair of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus, issued the memo on Tuesday—about a week after the Justice Department confirmed that it proposed reclassifying marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).

“Schedule III is not quite what we wanted—marijuana shouldn’t be scheduled at all—but it is nonetheless a revolutionary step that sends a signal about the imperative of ending the failed war on drugs,” Blumenauer said, adding that cannabis is “a winning issue.”

Administrative Progress: A Critical Step Forward

The memo underscores the significance of administrative progress in cannabis reform, particularly in acknowledging the medical value of marijuana and removing research barriers. It emphasizes the need for swift regulatory action to move through the rescheduling process.

Congressional Action: Addressing Key Priorities

Blumenauer’s memo stresses that while rescheduling is a significant step, there is still substantial work ahead for Congress. Key priorities include legislation to federally legalize cannabis, facilitate banking access for the industry, prevent Justice Department interference in state markets, and enable medical cannabis recommendations for veterans.

Further Administrative Recommendations

In addition to legislative action, the memo suggests further administrative steps, such as expanding pardons for individuals with federal marijuana convictions, updating enforcement priorities guidance, and addressing cannabis-related issues in areas like employment and housing.

A Call for Comprehensive Reform

Blumenauer urges the Biden-Harris Administration to consider the broader implications of marijuana prohibition and criminalization, aligning efforts with ending discriminatory policies and leveraging available powers for reform.

Momentum and Future Prospects

While celebrating the historic progress, Blumenauer acknowledges that critical work remains. He expresses commitment to building on the momentum generated by decades of advocacy to finally end cannabis prohibition.

Prospects for Congressional Action

Blumenauer predicts that the rescheduling decision will catalyze additional congressional action, such as advancing the bipartisan cannabis banking bill. He anticipates movement in the Senate and emphasizes the importance of addressing long-standing issues like banking access.

Anticipated Administrative Developments

Blumenauer expects the Justice Department to reissue marijuana enforcement discretion guidances, acknowledging societal changes and the rescheduling push. Meanwhile, DEA Administrator Anne Milgram refrains from commenting on the recent determination, citing the ongoing rulemaking process.

Conclusion: Seizing the Opportunity for Reform

As federal authorities take steps to reschedule marijuana, Blumenauer's memo outlines a comprehensive approach to cannabis reform, emphasizing the need for both legislative and administrative action. With optimism and determination, stakeholders look ahead to a future where cannabis prohibition is finally brought to an end.

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