

Renewed Efforts: South Dakota Gears Up for Another Recreational Cannabis Ballot Initiative

Matthew Schweich, the campaign director of South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws, is hopeful that their latest effort for recreational marijuana legalization will succeed where previous attempts fell short.

Late Start, Strong Finish

Despite a delayed start due to funding concerns, the campaign managed to gather 29,030 signatures for their recreational pot initiative, submitting them to the Secretary of State's office in Pierre on the final day allowed for submissions in 2024.

Funding Support

Funding for the petition drive came from the Grow South Dakota Ballot Committee and Puffy's Dispensary, indicating a broad base of support for the legalization effort.

Signature Requirements

To qualify for the ballot, initiated measures require a certain number of verified signatures. For recreational marijuana legalization, this number stands at 17,508, representing 5% of the total vote for governor in the last gubernatorial election.

Challenges Ahead

If the measure makes the ballot, the campaign will face possible voter fatigue, as this will be the third consecutive statewide election where the issue has been presented to South Dakota voters.

Previous Attempts

In 2020, Amendment A passed with 54% of the vote, but it was later challenged and overturned by the South Dakota Supreme Court. In 2022, voters rejected Initiated Measure 27, indicating a challenging road ahead for legalization advocates.

Learning from Mistakes

Schweich acknowledges the political miscalculation of pushing for legalization in 2022 and emphasizes the importance of focusing on get-out-the-vote efforts rather than trying to sway voters' opinions.

National Context

With recreational marijuana legal in 24 states, supporters highlight economic benefits from tax revenue, while opponents raise concerns about social costs and health risks, including potential cardiovascular problems.

Future Outlook

Schweich is committed to respecting the outcome of the 2024 vote, indicating that if the measure fails, there will not be a fourth consecutive attempt to legalize recreational marijuana in South Dakota—at least not from his group.

As South Dakotans await the fate of the recreational marijuana initiative on the ballot, Matthew Schweich and South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws remain optimistic that the third time will indeed be the charm.

for legalization in the state.

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