

DeSantis Will Honor Florida Voters' Decision on Legalization Despite State Officials' Opposition, Says Cannabis CEO

The CEO of a major cannabis company, Kim Rivers of Trulieve, has expressed confidence that Florida Governor Ron DeSantis (R) will respect the will of the people and implement a marijuana legalization initiative if voters approve it this November. This confidence remains despite DeSantis's current campaign against the measure and another top state official using a recent car crash allegedly involving cannabis as a reason to vote against it.

Efforts to Build Support

Rivers, whose company is financially backing the Smart & Safe Florida campaign, discussed strategic advertising efforts to build support for the legalization measure during an interview with The Dales Report on Friday. She challenged recent polls that have cast doubt on the measure's prospects, reiterating that internal polls show a comfortable margin of passage despite the 60 percent threshold required for a constitutional amendment.

Governor's Position on Legalization

Rivers suggested that Governor DeSantis's opposition might not be entirely policy-based but rather influenced by the administration's stance on a separate abortion rights measure. She stated her belief that DeSantis would honor the voters' decision once they have spoken. "I do think that Governor DeSantis historically has been absolutely a man who I think will continue to stand behind the will of the people once they've spoken," Rivers said.

Advertisement Strategies

To bolster support, Rivers highlighted the launch of targeted advertisements designed to educate voters. The media campaign focuses on areas where data analytics indicate persuadable voters. "We're leaning into those messages that we've already test-messaged...to increase that number of in-the-bank voters," she explained.

Opposition from State Officials

State officials, including Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis (R), have voiced strong opposition to the measure. Patronis cited a recent fatal car crash involving a driver who allegedly used marijuana as a reason to vote against legalization. He acknowledged the medical value of cannabis for certain patients but stated he is a "hard no" on adult-use legalization.

Official Resistance and Polling

The Florida Republican Party has officially opposed the marijuana legalization initiative, enabling DeSantis to fundraise against it. DeSantis has predicted that voters will reject the initiative, arguing it would “reduce the quality of life” in the state. However, Rivers remains optimistic, dismissing polls that show lower support and emphasizing internal data indicating strong voter backing.

Potential Economic Impact

Economic analysts estimate that the marijuana legalization initiative could generate between \$195.6 million and \$431.3 million in new sales tax revenue annually if approved. These figures could rise if lawmakers impose additional excise taxes on cannabis transactions similar to other legalized states.

Initiative Details

If approved, the initiative would amend the state Constitution to allow existing medical cannabis companies to sell marijuana to adults over 21. Adults could purchase and possess up to one ounce of cannabis, with a five-gram limit on marijuana concentrates. Home cultivation and equity provisions are not included in the proposal.

Despite opposition from state officials and recent polls, Rivers and the Smart & Safe Florida campaign remain focused on educating voters and securing the necessary support for the marijuana legalization initiative. With significant financial backing and strategic advertising efforts, they aim to ensure a favorable outcome at the ballot this November.

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