California Passes Bill to End Workplace Marijuana Testing

It’s been a busy summer in California. DPA has made exciting progress on marijuana and criminal justice, but we’ve also faced a setback on harm reduction.

On September 18, Gov. Newsom signed AB 2188, which will remove marijuana drug testing from the workplace for most employees in California. It also protects employees from workplace punishment for legal marijuana use off-the-clock. DPA and our allies at California NORML have worked hard to pass this bill over the past several months.

The legislation will amend California’s anti-discrimination law to make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person in hiring or termination for using marijuana when not at work.

The law still permits employers to prohibit marijuana use or possession when working. The bill includes some exemptions, such as for certain employees in the construction trade, and drivers regulated under the US Department of...
Later in September, Gov. Newsom signed AB 2195 (the Alternative Plea Act) into law. It allows prosecutors to offer an alternative plea option for some drug related offenses. This protects Californians from certain collateral consequences that they could face from a drug conviction, including immigration-related consequences.

“With the passage of AB 2195, the California Legislature is rightly disrupting the drug war’s harmful legacy and paving the way for Californians to not be subject to unduly harsh punishments and life-altering barriers as a result of a drug offense,” said Jeannette Zanipatin, director of DPA’s California office.

Despite our hard-fought progress, there is much to be done to dismantle the drug war in California. In late August, Gov. Newsom vetoed SB 57, a bill to pilot overdose prevention centers (OPCs) in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland. OPCs are safe spaces for people to consume drugs in controlled settings under the supervision of trained staff. OPCs also provide connections to health and social services, including drug treatment.

“In 2021 alone, California lost over 10,000 residents to the overdose crisis, and we are continuing to see it disproportionately claim the lives of people of color throughout the state,” Jeannette Zanipatin said, after the governor’s decision. “Make no mistake, these deaths are 100 percent avoidable through common-sense, cost-effective measures, like SB 57, but because of his veto, people will continue to die alone and in the shadows.”

Follow the link to learn more about the bill.
On August 31, Oregon approved grants totaling $302 million for addiction services. These funds were made available by Measure 110, a voter approved ballot measure which was spearheaded by DPA in 2020. The measure made Oregon the first state in the U.S. to decriminalize drug possession and greatly expand addiction services.

This funding supports 237 service organizations in every county of the state. It provides treatment, harm reduction, overdose prevention, housing, and employment support. As a result, tens of thousands of people will be able to access the help they need. The first $32 million in grants were approved last year, providing services to 16,000 people.

“It’s been a long road, but we’re ecstatic. This is the first step in ensuring Oregon delivers on its promise of replacing a criminal legal approach to drugs with a public health approach and offering the rest of the country a glimpse of what is ultimately possible when we offer people support instead of punishment,” said Kassandra Frederique, DPA’s executive director.

Drug possession arrests in Oregon have significantly decreased since Measure 110 took effect in February 2021. A year and a half later, polling shows that Oregonians continue to support drug decriminalization. A survey released by Data for Progress found that 55% of all likely voters believed that the measure should remain in place. It also shows majority support for the measure in every region of the state.

The survey also found that Oregon voters strongly support the individual provisions of the measure. This includes 61% of voters supporting the elimination of criminal penalties for drug possession, and 91% supporting peer support mentoring for people struggling with substance use.

“This survey makes it abundantly clear that Oregon voters recognize the value of addressing the overdose crisis through continued investment in public health resources and services rather than reverting to the deeply
flawed and unjust punitive approaches of the past,” said Kassandra Frederique. “That is what Oregonians overwhelmingly voted for in the November 2020 election, and that is what they are continuing to support today.”

Learn more about the $302 million in grants that Oregon is dispersing to addiction services

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

Featured Post: Drug Facts Videos in Spanish

Publicación reciente: Videos sobre diferentes tipos de drogas en español

DPA has created four Spanish-language videos to share important information about different types of drugs. The videos explore facts
and myths around cocaine, heroin/opiates, MDMA, and methamphetamine use. The videos, presented by Dr. Jamie Arredondo and Dr. David Goodman-Meza, can be found on DPA's YouTube page. Make sure to share them with the Spanish-speaking people in your life.

DPA ha creado cuatro videos en español para compartir información importante sobre diferentes tipos de drogas. Los videos exploran mitos y realidades sobre el consumo de cocaína, heroína/ opioides, MDMA y metanfetamina. Los videos, presentados por el Dr. Jamie Arredondo y el Dr. David Goodman-Meza, se pueden encontrar en la página de YouTube de DPA. Asegúrese de compartirlas con las personas que hablen español en su vida.

First-Ever Comprehensive Marijuana Reform Bill Introduced in the Senate

In late July, the first-ever comprehensive marijuana reform bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate. The Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act (CAOA) would deschedule marijuana at the federal level and begin repairing the harms caused by prohibition.

The bill was introduced by Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senator Booker, and Senator Wyden. DPA has been working alongside our allies in the Marijuana Justice Coalition to advance this bill.

“The significance of this bill finally being introduced in the Senate cannot be understated. For over 85 years, our communities have been locked up and locked out of opportunities as a result of punitive and racially-motivated marijuana enforcement,” said Maritza Perez,
director of DPA’s Office of Federal Affairs.

“While the bill – in its current form – has room for improvement, we are incredibly grateful to have reached this critical milestone and look forward to working with the Senate in the coming days and months to meticulously address those concerns and ensure the reforms this bill calls for authentically embody the kind of justice, opportunity and reinvestment our communities deserve.”

The CAOA builds off the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act, which was passed by the House of Representatives in April. The MORE Act would support communities that have suffered under prohibition, and help ensure an equitable marketplace. DPA worked has hard to pass the MORE Act since it was first developed.

Learn more about the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act

More than 80% of Vermonters Support Decriminalizing Drug Possession

In June, DPA and Data for Progress released new public opinion data. The results showed that more than 84% of Vermont voters support removing criminal penalties for possession of small amounts of drugs. This includes a majority of voters across all major demographic groups and party affiliations. The poll also found that 81% of voters support reframing the state’s approach to drug use as a health issue.

Around 65% of respondents said that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports removing criminal penalties for possession of small amounts of drugs.
“With Vermont having one of the highest increases in overdoses in the country last year, it’s clear that the existing approach of criminalizing people who use drugs isn’t working to keep people safe. In fact, it has only made things worse,” said Grey Gardner, a senior staff attorney at DPA. “This survey makes it abundantly clear that Vermont voters want a different approach - one focused on health rather than arrest and punishment.”

During the 2022 Vermont legislative session, a group of 42 state legislators sponsored a groundbreaking bill that would decriminalize possession of small “personal use” amounts of drugs. In hearings on the bill, DPA’s executive director Kassandra Frederique told the House Judiciary Committee that “the continued criminalization of personal drug use risks the continuation of Vermonters being ensnared in a criminal legal system that will increase harm to individuals and communities, and not reduce harm. It is crucial for us to decouple help from criminalization.”

Learn more about the movement for decriminalization in Vermont.

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Drug Policy in the News

**Vice:** The US Regularly Treats Black Weed Users Like Brittney Griner

**Leafly:** Tell the truth, Fox News: Cannabis use doesn’t cause violence

**New York Times:** Soaring Overdose Rates in the Pandemic Reflected Widening Racial Disparities

**Filter:** New York’s Gray-Market Cannabis Businesses Face Hard Choices
Reuters: Thailand legalizes growing, consumption of marijuana

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