

# Marijuana Legalization Laws

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**IREM® Legislative White Paper**



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## **Background**

Cannabis, commonly known as marijuana, is a plant known for its [psychoactive and physiological effects](#). The principal [psychoactive chemical](#) of cannabis is [tetrahydrocannabinol](#) (THC). Some believe that marijuana can help with the symptoms of various illnesses and in the treatment of the side effects of chemotherapy treatments for cancer patients. However, the medicinal value of cannabis continues to be a much disputed topic. To date, the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) has not approved marijuana for any medical indication, and maintains that marijuana is associated with numerous harmful health effects. The FDA has, however, approved one drug containing a synthetic version of THC for treatment of certain medical conditions.

Since 1996, 23 states and the District of Columbia have passed some version of laws allowing for the legal use of marijuana. While the laws vary, all 24 jurisdictions allow for some use of medical marijuana. There are important differences between states regarding what ailments marijuana is approved to treat. Medical marijuana can be used to treat nearly any condition in California, whereas in other stricter states, only very specific conditions are approved. A number of states allow cultivation of marijuana plants for individual consumption and 2 states now allow the use of marijuana for recreational use.

Federal laws treatment of marijuana differs from state law. Under federal law, marijuana remains a Schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act. Distribution of marijuana remains a federal offense, and as a Schedule I substance, marijuana is barred at the federal level from being prescribed. However, in August 2013, the Department of Justice published a notice of its intent NOT to prosecute activities that are legal under the state law in which the activity is taking place; but that notice reinforced the fact that marijuana remains illegal at the federal level. There have been repeated calls to have the FDA change the status of marijuana so that it can be legally prescribed by doctors. Senators from Washington and Colorado, the two states with the most liberal marijuana laws, have urged the White House to allow state licensed marijuana businesses, dispensaries, and growers in their states to be immune from federal prosecution.

Federal enforcement of the federal ban on marijuana has been limited to cases involving interstate distribution or large-scale growing or selling of marijuana. However, civil asset forfeiture laws do allow the federal government to seize any property that has allowed illegal activity – but to date; these have not been used against a multifamily property where a tenant partook of marijuana. For properties that have permitted cultivation, the federal government has not been as hands off. In 2012, a cultivation business on a rented property was raided, and the landlord pled guilty to "maintaining drug-involved premises." For more information, see this article: <http://missoulanews.bigskyexpress.com/missoula/kalispell-landlord-snared-by-marijuana-raids-in-montana/Content?oid=1543843>

## **Types of Laws:**

Medical Marijuana Laws: Currently 24 jurisdictions permit the use of medical marijuana (see chart below).

Growing Laws: 15 states have individual/personal cultivation laws (see chart below).

Recreational Marijuana Laws: Currently 2 states permit the recreational use of marijuana (see chart below).

## **Things to Think About:**

**Lease Addendum:** If your lease prohibits smoking on the property, you do not need to specifically amend it to prohibit the smoking of marijuana, unless you specify tobacco in the lease. However, if your lease prohibits illegal drug activity – but does not specify federal or state law – you may need to specify federal law if you want to prohibit marijuana use in a state that permits it.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Because the use of marijuana remains a federal offense, some will argue that you may deny a reasonable accommodation claim for the use of medical marijuana under the federal Fair Housing Act. State courts treatment of this issue. However, the courts are not in agreement on this issue. In the employment area, courts have denied medical marijuana as a reasonable accommodation (see *Casias v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.* - <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-6th-circuit/1612751.html>). Given the federal government's express intention not to

enforce the law prohibiting use of marijuana may lead state courts to be more lenient.

**Growing Marijuana:** Currently 15 states allow individuals to grow marijuana for personal use. The growing of marijuana requires significant amounts of water, heat, and humidity. These conditions can create mold issues in properties. These requirements can also increase utility costs for the landlord, and if tenants don't pay individual electric and water bills. Further, the property could be subject to civil asset forfeiture if you permit growing. If you own property in a state that allows individual growing, you will want to address this specifically in the lease. In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the federal government (through the Congress) may criminalize the personal production and use of marijuana under the Commerce Clause of the Constitution, even where states approve its use for medicinal purposes (see *Gonzales v. Raich* at <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=000&invol=03-1454#concurrency1>.) See more on *commercial marijuana cultivation under industrial properties*.

**Alternatives to Smoking Marijuana:** Marijuana does not have to be smoked to absorb THC. There are a number of alternatives to smoking may be available. Marijuana can be ingested through baking into food products; it can be incorporated into oils, butters, or teas; or made into a tincture that is added to foods or placed under the tongue. THC is also available in a spray form, and can be vaporized and inhaled. In fact, vaporizing may provide the highest levels of THC from the plant. There are even lotions or salves containing cannabis that can be applied topically. Lastly, there is a hash or wax that contains high levels of THC that can be added to food or drinks. Licensed dispensaries may carry these products in addition to the more traditional form of cannabis for smoking.

**Summary of Lease Considerations:**

- 1) If your lease prohibits smoking, review to ensure language is not limited to tobacco.
- 2) Remember there are alternatives to smoking marijuana, and consider policy on those.
- 3) Consider exceptions for reasonable accommodation for medical marijuana use.
- 4) Growing marijuana plants can be expensive and can lead to other property issues. Consider lease terms related to such.
- 5) Review lease language for conflicts between state and federal laws.

**Considerations by Property Type:**

**Community Association (both Single Family and Condominiums):** Community associations may have covenants or rules against smoking on or around the property. However, many community association rules are silent on this issue. Associations can attempt to change the rules to address the issue of marijuana, but residents may see such a change (to prohibit smoking of marijuana within units) as an attack on private property rights. There has been no clear direction from the courts. In fact, most court decisions have resulted in a finding for private property rights over the rights of the property or neighbors. In reviewing their rules, community associations should consider the impact on all residents of the property. Can the smoke travel easily from one unit to another? Can filters be installed to limit smoke infiltration? Can the resident utilize another way to partake of the marijuana? If it can only be smoked, can the resident limit smoking to hours when neighboring residents are less likely to be at home? The ability to grow marijuana plants on a property should also be considered.

**Multifamily Property:** Multifamily properties with smoking bans may also restrict the smoking of marijuana. However, residents may request a reasonable accommodation for the use of medical marijuana; depending upon state law, owners/managers may find it difficult to refuse such a request. California, for example, considers denial of such a request a fair housing violation under state law. However, the conflict between state and federal laws make its application tricky for multifamily property owners and managers.

Multifamily owners and managers must also address the issue of cultivation of plants. While a number of states

allow certified individuals to grow marijuana plants for individual use; such growing requires significant electricity, water and heat. Owners/managers may want to specifically prohibit the cultivation of marijuana plants in the lease, even when the tenant is responsible for paying for utilities.

**Federally Assisted Properties:** On January 20, 2011, HUD reiterated that the use of marijuana (even for medical purposes) is prohibited in federally assisted properties. HUD stated that Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and owners of such housing must deny admission to those with a household member who is illegally using a federally controlled substance; and may not provide a reasonable accommodation new tenants. For existing tenants, owners/managers must establish procedures and lease provisions that allow the termination of assistance and tenancy for those engaging in federally illegal behavior. HUD did state that owners are not compelled to evict existing tenants, and PHAs may, on a case-by-case basis, make exceptions for users of medical marijuana that are existing tenants.

**Retail Space:** States with marijuana laws also have processes for licensing dispensaries. These dispensaries are located in retail locations, often in stand-alone buildings, but may also be located in shopping centers. If leasing or selling space to a licensed marijuana dispensary, managers and owners should take into consideration the impact on neighboring businesses and local residents, as well as federal civil asset forfeiture laws and municipal zoning laws.

**Industrial Space:** To allow residents to obtain marijuana, states have also passed laws related to the commercial cultivation of marijuana. Marijuana plants require significant light, water and humidity to thrive. A plant can require 16-20 hours of light daily, the ideal growing temperature is between 75-86°F, and plants are often grown hydroponically. These factors should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to lease to licensed growers. In addition, there have been cases of federal law enforcement raiding properties growing substantial quantities of marijuana and holding the growers and the owner or manager of the property liable.

**Office Buildings:** Office properties that are non-smoking should ensure that leases are not limited to tobacco if there is a wish to also exclude the smoking of marijuana. In addition, leases that have language about tenants' illegal drug use also want to be clear that "illegal" covers both state and federal law. Marijuana businesses are likely to need corporate office space that may be separate from retail or cultivation space. Owners/managers should consider whether or not to lease to these businesses.

**Conclusion**

Over the last 15 years, the number of states allowing for some use of marijuana has been increasing. The implications for real estate are numerous. The conflict between state and federal laws create extra considerations. Owners/managers should take care to be up-to-date on the laws in jurisdictions where they operate, and ensure their lease provisions specifically address their policies related to these laws.

*\*from the National Conference of State Legislatures*

Table 1. State Medical Marijuana/Cannabis Program Laws						
State	Statutory Language (year)	Patient Registry or ID cards	Allows Dispensaries	Specifies Conditions	Recognize s Patients from other states	State Allows for Recreation al Adult Use
Alaska	<a href="#">Measure 8</a> (1998) <a href="#">SB 94</a> (1999) <a href="#">Statute Title 17, Chapter</a>	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

\*from the National Conference of State Legislatures

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State	Statutory Language (year)	Patient Registry or ID cards	Allows Dispensaries	Specifies Conditions	Recognize s Patients from other states	State Allows for Recreational Adult Use
	<a href="#">37</a>					
Arizona	<a href="#">Proposition 203</a> (2010)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
California	<a href="#">Proposition 215</a> (1996) <a href="#">SB 420</a> (2003)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Colorado	<a href="#">Amendment 20</a> (2000)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	<a href="#">Amendment 64</a> (2012) Task Force Implementation Recommendations (2013) <a href="#">Analysis of CO Amendment 64</a> (2013) <a href="#">Colorado Marijuana Sales and Tax Reports 2014</a> <a href="#">"Edibles" regulation measure</a>
Connecticut	<a href="#">HB 5387</a> (2012)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Delaware	<a href="#">SB 17</a> (2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
District of Columbia	<a href="#">Initiative 59</a> (1998) <a href="#">LR 720</a> (2010)	Yes	Yes	TBD		
Hawaii	<a href="#">SB 862</a> (2000)	Yes	No	Yes		
Illinois	<a href="#">HB 1</a> (2013) <i>Eff.</i> 1/1/2014	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	

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	<a href="#">Proposed rules as of April, 2014</a>					
<b>Maine</b>	<a href="#">Question 2</a> (1999) <a href="#">LD 611</a> (2002) <a href="#">Question 5</a> (2009) <a href="#">LD 1811</a> (2010) <a href="#">LD 1296</a> (2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<b>Maryland</b>	<a href="#">HB 702</a> (2003) <a href="#">SB 308</a> (2011) <a href="#">HB 180/SB 580</a> (2013) <a href="#">HB 1101-Chapter 403</a> (2013) <a href="#">SB 923</a> (signed 4/14/14) <a href="#">HB 881</a> -similar to <a href="#">SB 923</a>	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<b>Massachusetts</b>	<a href="#">Question 3</a> (2012) <a href="#">Regulations</a> (2013)	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<b>Michigan</b>	<a href="#">Proposal 1</a> (2008)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
<b>Minnesota</b>	<a href="#">SF 2471</a> , Chapter 311 (2014)	Yes	Yes, limited, liquid extract products only	Yes		
<b>Montana</b>	<a href="#">Initiative 148</a> (2004) <a href="#">SB</a>	Yes	No**	Yes	No	

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State	Statutory Language (year)	Patient Registry or ID cards	Allows Dispensaries	Specifies Conditions	Recognize s Patients from other states	State Allows for Recreation al Adult Use
	<a href="#">423</a> (2011)					
<b>Nevada</b>	<a href="#">Question 9</a> (2000) <a href="#">NRS 453A</a> <a href="#">NAC 453A</a>	Yes	No	Yes		
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<a href="#">HB 573</a> (2013)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, with a note from their home state, but they cannot purchase or grow their own in NH.	
<b>New Jersey</b>	<a href="#">SB 119</a> (2009) <a href="#">Program information</a>	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<b>New Mexico</b>	<a href="#">SB 523</a> (2007) <a href="#">Medical Cannabis Program</a>	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<b>New York</b>	<a href="#">A6357</a> (2014) Signed by governor 7/5/14	Yes	Ingested doses may not contain more than 10 mg of THC, product may not be combusted (smoked).	Yes		
<b>Oregon</b>	<a href="#">Oregon Medical Marijuana Act</a> (1998)	Yes	No	Yes		

\*from the National Conference of State Legislatures

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State	Statutory Language (year)	Patient Registry or ID cards	Allows Dispensaries	Specifies Conditions	Recognizes Patients from other states	State Allows for Recreational Adult Use
	<a href="#">SB 161</a> (2007)					
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<a href="#">SB 791</a> (2007) <a href="#">SB 185</a> (2009)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<b>Vermont</b>	<a href="#">SB 76</a> (2004) <a href="#">SB 7</a> (2007) <a href="#">SB 17</a> (2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<b>Washington</b>	<a href="#">Initiative 692</a> (1998) <a href="#">SB 5798</a> (2010) <a href="#">SB 5073</a> (2011)	No	No	Yes		<a href="#">Initiative 502</a> (2012) <a href="#">WAC Marijuana rules: Chapter 314-55 WAC</a>

Laws Relating to Personal Cultivation of Marijuana Plants (for those with a medical prescription)

State	Cultivation Law
Alaska	Six marijuana plants, only three of which may be mature
Arizona	12 marijuana plants, none within 25 miles of a licensed dispensary
California	Six mature or 12 immature marijuana plants (some counties allow a grow space of up to 100 square feet)
Colorado	Six marijuana plants
Delaware	Only licensed compassion center agents may cultivate medical marijuana for qualified patients (home cultivation is prohibited)
Hawaii	Seven marijuana plants, no more than three of which are mature
Maine	Six marijuana plants, no more than three of which are mature
Massachusetts	Up to a 60-day supply
Michigan	12 marijuana plants
Montana	Six marijuana plants
Nevada	Seven marijuana plants, of which only three may be mature
New Mexico	12 seedlings and four mature marijuana plants (16 total); licensed producers may grow up to 150 mature plants at a time
Oregon	18 seedlings and six mature marijuana plants (24 total)
Rhode Island	12 marijuana plants
Washington	15 marijuana plants



