

Alaska regulators are first to OK marijuana use at pot shops

November 20 2015, by Becky Bohrer

The board tasked with writing rules for Alaska's recreational marijuana industry voted Friday to allow for people to use pot at certain stores that will sell it, a first among the four states that have legalized the drug.

The 3-2 vote by the Marijuana Control Board also changed the definition of the term "in public" to allow for [consumption](#) at some pot shops, none of which are open yet. Colorado, Washington and Oregon have legalized recreational marijuana but ban its public use, including in pot stores.

"This would put, I think, Alaska in the forefront on this issue," said Chris Lindsey, a legislative analyst with the Marijuana Policy Project.

On-site consumption was a hot topic during the public comment process in Alaska. Board chairman Bruce Schulte, who offered the amendment, said there appeared to be a public demand for such facilities.

Voters last November passed the state's initiative legalizing recreational pot use by those 21 and older. The law banned public consumption but didn't define "public."

Regulators adopted an emergency regulation earlier this year when the law was taking effect that defined "in public" as a place where the public or a substantial group of people have access.

Some initiative supporters thought that definition was too restrictive, saying it would seemingly even bar pot consumption at weddings or

office parties.

The board amended the definition to allow for consumption in a designated area at certain licensed [pot](#) stores. It had previously said it lacked the legal authority to create a type of license permitting [public](#) use.

Cynthia Franklin, the board's director, said she expects another round of regulations detailing exactly what will be allowed at those stores, such as the types of marijuana.

The regulations, once adopted, will undergo a legal review by Alaska's Department of Law.

It is still illegal to buy [marijuana](#) in Alaska because businesses have not yet been licensed to sell it. The board is set to begin accepting business applications in February, with the initial industry licenses expected to be awarded in May.

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