

New York governor says he's ready to legalize recreational pot

December 18 2018

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo on Monday called for the legalization of recreational marijuana use in his state—a move that would add America's most populous city to the growing list of places that allow the drug's use.

The announcement marked a shift for the Democrat, who was re-elected for a third term as governor of a state that is home to about 20 million people.

"Let's legalize the adult use of recreational marijuana, once and for all," Cuomo said in a speech at Hunter College in Manhattan about his priorities for 2019.

Cuomo had long opposed the legalization of marijuana, but during his re-election campaign earlier this year, when he faced competition from the left in the form of actress Cynthia Nixon, he said he was open to the possibility.

On Monday, he listed the arguments for decriminalizing marijuana use that Nixon had made. At the time, she said the only people still being arrested for smoking a joint in New York were minorities.

"The fact is we have had two criminal justice systems—one for the wealthy and the well off, and one for everyone else," Cuomo said, decrying a system he said had "for too long targeted the African-American and minority communities."

New York state includes New York City, which is the most populous American city with some 8.5 million residents.

If the state were to legalize recreational marijuana use in 2019, it would be a boost to supporters of legalization nationwide.

Canada, which borders New York, in October became the world's first major economy to fully legalize cannabis.

Since Colorado decriminalized recreational pot use in 2014, nine other [states](#) and the federal capital Washington, DC have followed suit.

Those states are Alaska, California, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont and Washington.

In November, Massachusetts became the first East Coast state to open pot shops for those over the age of 21. In New Jersey, another neighbor of New York, lawmakers are expected to move towards legalization in 2019.

Most other states allow for limited use of medical [marijuana](#).

It remains outlawed under federal regulations.

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