

Need a legal pot shop in California? Grab your smartphone

January 24 2020, by Michael R. Blood



In this Friday, April 5, 2019, file photo, a customer takes a photo of large jars of marijuana from on display for sale at Rev-Up a cannabis marketplace in Los Angeles. California is trying a new strategy to cut into the state's huge illegal marijuana market. State regulators have proposed rules that would require legal shops to post their unique quick response code certificates in storefront windows to help consumers identify licensed businesses. Shoppers would use their smartphones to scan the familiar, black-and-white codes, similar to a bar code, to determine if a business is selling legal, tested cannabis products. (AP

Photo/Richard Vogel, File)

Want to find a legal marijuana shop in California? Grab your smartphone.

In another step to curb the state's flourishing illegal pot market, California regulators proposed rules Thursday that would require legal shops to post a unique black-and-white code in storefront windows to help [consumers](#) identify licensed businesses.

Shoppers could use their smartphones to scan the familiar, boxy label known as a QR code—similar to a bar code—to determine if a business is selling legal, tested cannabis products.

The codes also would be required when transporting or delivering cannabis.

"The proposed regulations will help consumers avoid purchasing cannabis goods from unlicensed businesses," said Lori Ajax, who heads the state's Bureau of Cannabis Control. "These requirements will also assist [law enforcement](#) in distinguishing between legal and illegal transportation of cannabis goods."

California—the world's largest legal pot market—kicked off broad, legal sales in January 2018. But the illicit market has continued to thrive, with consumers spending roughly \$3 in the state's underground pot economy for every \$1 in the legal one, a report from industry advisers Arcview Market Research and BDS Analytics estimated last year.



In this June 28, 2017, file photo, workers put barcode stickers on jars of marijuana at the Desert Grown Farms cultivation facility in Las Vegas. California is trying a new strategy to cut into the state's huge illegal marijuana market. State regulators have proposed rules that would require legal shops to post their unique quick response code certificates in storefront windows to help consumers identify licensed businesses. Shoppers would use their smartphones to scan the familiar, black-and-white codes, similar to a bar code, to determine if a business is selling legal, tested cannabis products. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

Hefty tax rates have been blamed for steering consumers into the illicit [market](#), where shops are often indistinguishable from legal ones and operate in [plain sight](#).

Last year, the state mounted a publicity campaign—Get #weedwise—to

encourage consumers to verify that their purchases are tested and legal. Ads were posted on [social media](#) and billboards promoting a state website where shoppers can quickly check if a shop is licensed.

The advertising campaign makes a simple argument: You don't know what you're getting if you buy illegal products.

The state also has sought to increase enforcement to shut down illegal shops and cultivation sites.

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