

Mississippi governor signs law allowing medical marijuana

February 3 2022, by Emily Wagster Pettus



A senator holds a bag of hemp product, used by Sen. Kevin Blackwell, R-Southaven, lead negotiator, to illustrate to lawmakers what specific portions of the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Equivalency Units would look like, during his presentation of the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Act in the Senate Chamber at the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson, Miss., Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022. The body passed the act. Credit: AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

Mississippi is legalizing medical marijuana for people with debilitating conditions such as cancer, AIDS and sickle cell disease.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed [the legislation](#) Wednesday and it became law immediately. It could be months before the first marijuana dispensaries open.

"There is no doubt that there are individuals in our state who could do significantly better if they had access to medically prescribed doses of cannabis," [Reeves wrote in a statement](#) posted to Twitter. "There are also those who really want a recreational marijuana program that could lead to more people smoking and less people working, with all the societal and family ills that that brings."

The [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) says 36 states and four territories already allowed the medical use of cannabis. Mississippi becomes the 37th state.

"For all the people who are touched in some way by a loved one or someone they know who benefits from [medical cannabis](#), this brings their quality of life back," said Ken Newburger, [executive director](#) the Mississippi Medical Marijuana Association, a group that pushed for legalization.

A majority of Mississippi voters approved a [medical marijuana](#) initiative in November 2020, and it would have allowed people to buy up to 5 ounces a month. The state Supreme Court invalidated it six months later by ruling that the state's initiative process was outdated and the measure was not put properly on the ballot.



Gov. Tate Reeves outlines his priorities during his State of the State address before a joint session of the Legislature on the steps of the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson, Miss., Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

The state House and Senate, both controlled by Republicans, passed the final version of Senate Bill 2095 last week.

The new law will allow patients to buy up to to 3.5 grams of cannabis per day, up to six days a week. That is about 3 ounces per month. It sets taxes on production and sale of cannabis, and it specifies that plants must be grown indoors under controlled conditions.

Reeves said because of the reduction from 5 ounces a month in the

initiative to 3 ounces a month in the new law, "there will be hundreds of millions of fewer joints on the streets because of this improvement."

The new law prohibits the state from providing economic development incentives for the cannabis industry. The state often provides tax breaks and financial assistance for roads or water access to industrial sites.

The law gives cities and counties 90 days to opt out of allowing medical [marijuana](#) facilities, for growing or selling. But, people in those communities could petition for an election to overrule local officials' decisions and allow them.

Clint Patterson is chief executive officer of Mockingbird Cannabis, which plans to operate in the state. He said cannabis products can alleviate pain and suffering.

"We look forward to serving the citizens of Mississippi as they seek to improve their health and quality of life through responsible cannabis use," Patterson said in a statement.

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