

Oregon weed legal soon, but not legally sold

28 June 2015, by Tim Fought

Come Wednesday, the pot stashes in Oregon are legal—up to 8 ounces. So is the homegrown, up to four plants a household.

The legalization of recreational [marijuana](#) on July 1 makes the state the fourth to do so, following Colorado, Washington state and Alaska. The nation's capital, Washington, D.C., also allows possession of personal amounts, though not sales.

Here's a look at Oregon's law and the legal pot movement:

WHAT CHANGES JULY 1 IN OREGON?

Not much, actually. In populous parts of the state that have long been tolerant of marijuana, police don't generally bust people using it in private. Most important, though, is that under the new law it's still illegal to sell recreational marijuana. When Oregon voters approved Measure 91 last November, they left the job of writing rules for pot shops to the Legislature and the state liquor control agency, which so far haven't gotten it all figured out. As of now, it's likely that July 1 will pass and users won't have a legal way to buy what they can use legally.

WHAT'S UP IN OTHER STATES?

A legal pot measure has qualified for the ballot next year in Nevada. The national advocacy organization NORML reports there are plans or hopes for 2016 initiatives in half a dozen more states. That includes the biggest prize, California, where proponents hope that shifting opinion and the presidential election, attracting young voters, could reverse a 2010 vote. Other states where votes are possible in 2016: Arizona, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri and Michigan. There may be a vote this year in Ohio, where legislators are trying to put a measure on the November ballot that legal marijuana advocates fear would negate theirs. Neither side has yet reserved a ballot spot.

OREGON AND POT: A BRIEF HISTORY

Oregon was the first state to lower penalties for small amounts of pot, "decriminalizing" it. That came in 1973. Medical marijuana followed in 1998. In 2012, voters rejected a first attempt to legalize recreational marijuana. It was widely viewed as poorly crafted. In 2013, the state approved dispensaries to sell medical pot, replacing a system that allowed patients to grow their own or, more commonly, designate someone to grow it for them. All along, marijuana farmers in southwestern Oregon, were growing world-class weed. Some of it was for medicinal use. Authorities say some went to the black market. Elsewhere, there are plenty of cultural signs of pot emerging from the underground, such as the specialty indoor garden stores that sell irrigation fittings and other cultivation gear nobody thinks is for orchids. Then, in November, voters approved Measure 91 by 12 percentage points, 56-44.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission is writing rules for growing and selling legal pot. It plans to accept applications from prospective farmers on Jan. 1. It says retail sales could start about harvest time next fall. Last week, the Legislature's joint marijuana committee voted to start retail sales sooner, by Oct. 1 this year, by going through the existing medical marijuana dispensaries, now more than 300 strong. Legislators say it will take a few months to write rules for the medical dispensaries to sell to non-patients, but the fall crop should be in by Oct. 1, ensuring enough for recreational and medical customers alike.

WHO'S NOT HAPPY?

Many in the semiarid central and eastern parts of Oregon and small towns elsewhere. Outside the Willamette Valley of western Oregon, voters weren't so enthusiastic about Measure 91. Legislators are poised to allow local governments in some counties or local voters elsewhere to bar both medical and recreational dispensaries—though not private possession and use. Some cities are restricting the

placement of [pot](#) businesses or passing odor ordinances to thwart outdoor gardens. Also unhappy are advocates of hemp, the marijuana strain that doesn't get you high but is good for clothing, food, rope and other utility purposes. Pot growers in southern Oregon fear cross-pollination would decrease the potency of their primo produce. The growers were organized at the Legislature, lobbyist and all, and lawmakers are working on a bill to put off much of the hemp farming.

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