



2020 candidates pushing pot legalization on campaign trail

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The record number of [2020 Democratic contenders](#) for U.S. president may be divided on a host of issues, but on [marijuana](#) legalization, most find themselves on the same page.

But how they parse it, and how far they're willing to go, varies somewhat.

"I think what we're seeing in 2020 is that this is becoming a litmus test in the Democratic primaries as all of these different candidates are competing to be perceived as the most progressive candidate. This question is going to be one of those tests that the progressive activists use to decide who is truly most progressive," said Emily Ekins, research fellow and director of polling at The Cato Institute.

A [Quinnipiac University poll](#) last month found 60 percent of registered voters think marijuana should be legal in the United States. And, a few percentage points more from the same poll, 63 percent, are in favor of erasing criminal records for marijuana possession.

Campaigning in [New Hampshire](#) this past weekend, South Bend Mayor [Pete Buttigieg](#) said: "it's such a mess," the country has created a "weird patchwork." He pointed out a lot of people are in prison for non-violent offenses and "everything about the way this has been handled is wrong.... states are leading the way but the federal government needs to do the same."

New Jersey Sen. [Cory Booker](#) has spearheaded the [Marijuana Justice Act](#), which would legalize marijuana at the federal level. The bill would take marijuana off the list of controlled substances and expunge criminal records of those who have served federal time for use and possession.

"How can we elect presidents who used marijuana, but not let people vote for president for the rest of their lives, because of such a charge?" Booker said during the rollout. The legislation is co-sponsored in part by fellow candidates Senators Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand and Bernie Sanders.

Recreational marijuana is legal in Colorado, Alaska, California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Michigan, Vermont and the District of Columbia.

Candidate and former Governor of Colorado, John Hickenlooper, oversaw the grand experiment when his state became the first to legalize recreational marijuana. He opposed the amendment, before voters passed it.

Shortly after jumping into the presidential race, he told reporters: "We should make sure that the federal laws are changed so that those states that have chosen to legalize marijuana can do so in an efficient and safe manner."

He also wants to see legal banking for the industry, pointing out, "...if you want a recipe for how you get corruption and create a generation of gangsters, make sure that a new industry is all cash."

Sanders has been talking pro-weed on the stump for years. Earlier this month in Pittsburgh, he marveled how far the country has come.

"Oh Bernie, you can't do that. Oh my god, the world will fall apart, if you legalize marijuana," he said he was told at first. "Well in case you haven't noticed, a lot of states are now doing, just that."

"I think what happened is Americans kind of wanted to see what would happen if we legalized this drug and when things seemed to go OK, people became more comfortable with it and people also started to believe that marijuana was not especially harmful to people's health," Ekins said.

Former U.S. Rep. Beto O'Rourke makes it a regular talking point on the trail. He lines up with others on ending the prohibition and expunging records. Adding, at a recent rally in Houston: "Let's end cash bail. Let's end for-profit prisons. And let us, once and for all, end the war on drugs."

President Trump has been more vocal regarding the flow of illegal drugs coming over the border. White House spokesperson Sara Sanders has said the president believes in enforcing federal law. As a candidate, he stated it should be up to the states.

"I think this is going to be an issue for the Democrats and they're going to hope to try to use this against Trump in the general. But I don't think it's going to work very well, because Trump has come out and said that he supports letting states decide if they want to legalize marijuana at the state level," Ekins said.

She notes, "There are very few issues where Americans have so dramatically changed their attitudes. Same sex marriage is one of them, marijuana legalization is the other."

Here is a look at other campaigns, which responded to Fox News requests for a position on recreational marijuana:

John Delaney, former U.S. Representative from Maryland

Has said he supports the federal government getting out of the way of states that want to legalize or decriminalize marijuana.

Andrew Yang, entrepreneur

Supports: full legalization of marijuana at the federal level and removing it from the controlled substances list; expunging the federal convictions of all marijuana-related use or possession offenses; identifying non-violent drug offenders for probation and potential early release.

Tulsi Gabbard, U.S. Representative from Hawaii

Her campaign team pointed to this link for a summary. The campaign's policy director says Gabbard has been fighting to decriminalize marijuana and she is on the House Cannabis Caucus and has been endorsed by NORML.

Jay Inslee, governor of Washington

The campaign said he successfully implemented the legalization of marijuana as governor and is now offering pardons to those with marijuana offense on their record.

Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator from Minnesota

"I support the legalization of marijuana and believe that states should have the right to determine the best approach to marijuana within their borders," the campaign said in a statement.

Eric Swalwell, U.S. Representative from California

The campaign says the former prosecutor has consistently has co-sponsored bills to end the federal prohibition on marijuana. He also has co-sponsored bills to provide for taxation of marijuana.

Seth Moulton, U.S. Representative from Massachusetts

According to his campaign, he has said in the past people will smoke marijuana regardless, we should find ways to regulate it and make it safe. In an interview Monday, he said, criminal justice reform is needed and he has been an advocate for legalizing marijuana.