



## Idaho House Blocks Anti-Marijuana Constitutional Amendment

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Idaho House lawmakers Thursday rejected a proposed constitutional amendment that would've blocked the ability of citizens to legalize any drug through a ballot initiative.

The proposed law would've required two-thirds approval from the House and Senate to remove a Schedule I or Schedule II drug, like marijuana or hemp.

State senators passed a similar proposal in February, but the issue now appears dead for the session.

A coalition of Republicans and Democrats opposed the measure, saying it would've made it practically impossible to legalize medical marijuana or CBD oil with trace amounts of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana that gets a person high.

Rep. Mike Kingsley (R-Lewiston), who co-sponsored a bill to legalize and regulate medical marijuana, was among them.

"I cannot think of a better definition of throwing the baby out with the bathwater," said Kingsley. "That's what this bill will do,"

He spoke about a woman who regularly drives across the Snake River to Clarkston, Washington to buy marijuana for her mother, who's a cancer patient. She told Kingsley she feared being arrested and losing her job if she were caught.

"Marijuana isn't the big nasty monster that everybody's making it out to be," said Rep. Chad Christensen (R-Iona).

Instead, Christensen said legislators should focus their energy on targeting doctors who overprescribe opiates to those with addiction problems.

But supporters, like Rep. Gary Marshall (R-Idaho Falls), said they want to keep Idaho safe for their children and grandchildren by not welcoming more drugs into the state.

Marshall said the proposal was appropriate, considering the Idaho constitution gives the state regulatory authority over all alcohol production and sales.

"Surely we have the right and responsibility to make the legalization of currently prohibited drugs the object of a very deliberate and thoughtful process," Marshall said.

Rep. Joe Palmer (R-Meridian), whose son pled guilty to drug charges in 2012 and 2017, gave an emotional speech about government helping families with these struggles.

“This is a way the government can support them by making it a little bit harder for the adversary to get in the way of the family doing their job and saving their children,” Palmer said.

Others also shared their personal stories.

Rep. Sue Chew (D-Boise), who opposed the measure, said her father is no longer alive after his battle with addiction. She mentioned the three c’s of addiction recovery: “I didn’t cause it, I can’t cure it and I can’t control it.”

“This legislation today will not help us to cure it, to control it and it’s not the cause by which we’ll be able to alleviate the situation,” Chew said.

Throughout the committee hearings held earlier this year, supporters of the amendment warned of increased crime rates in states that had legalized marijuana.

A recent study by the Cato Institute, a libertarian thinktank, found overall that “violent crime has neither soared nor plummeted in the wake of marijuana legalization.”

The analysis found traffic deaths remained flat. Tax revenue greatly increased, though the number of new jobs gained were moderate.

Advocates are currently collecting signatures to qualify an initiative to legalize medical marijuana in 2022.