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'THIS IS PROHIBITION 2.0'

Indiana's cannabis businesses brace for federal ban

Meagan Hipsky
Lafayette Journal & Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

"This is Prohibition 2.0, 100 years later," one Lafayette business owner says.

Come December, a legal high will be hard to find in Indiana. On the 11th of that month, a provision tucked into the late-2025 funding bill that reopened the federal government will trigger, closing most of the legal market for cannabis products in the state.

Previously, the 2018 federal farm bill had separated hemp from the legal category of marijuana. After drying a cannabis plant, if the weight is made of less than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), it's called "hemp." Any more, and it's classified as illegal marijuana. The same rubric applies to cannabis products in Indiana like gummies and drinks; if by weight it contains less than 0.3% THC, it's legal.

But in November 2025, President Donald Trump signed a stopgap federal funding bill that included a new, tighter definition of hemp. Under this impending federal law, the amount of THC in a "container," which the Food and Drug Administration has yet to define, will be limited to 0.4 milligrams. (If taking THC for the first time, one might start to feel an effect about 2.5 milligrams.)

Marguerite Bolt, Purdue University's hemp extension specialist, says the amount seems "super arbitrary."

Also banned are synthetic cannabinoids with human-made chemicals sold under names like K2 or spice. They are designed to bind to the same brain receptors as THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis.



Jeff Dalton, 37, stands outside downtown Lafayette business Generation NA. "It's like they're on a witch hunt," he says, referring to legislators who seek to ban cannabis products. PHOTOS BY MEAGAN HIPSKY/PALLADIUM-ITEM



Marguerite Bolt explains how terpenes, the chemicals that give cannabis its distinct musky smell, volatilize. Just from walking through fresh plants, the odor clings to her clothes.

How much money could Indiana generate if cannabis were legalized?

Indiana residents spend $1.2 billion to $2.6 billion on cannabis products annually, according to a RAND Corp. analysis released in April. Bordering states, all of which allow cannabis for medical use, soak up much of that revenue.

Almost 20% of Indiana residents ages 12 and older reported using cannabis in the past year, and a third of those claim daily use, overtaking alcohol as the nation's daily intoxicant of choice.

If Indiana were to legalize cannabis, the study estimates that it could generate $180 million in taxes within five years and reduce the annual $10 million to $20 million the state burns on cannabis-related criminal justice costs.

Support for cannabis legislation is a bipartisan issue. A study released in January by the Bowen Center at Ball State University found that 84% of Hoosiers would legalize cannabis: 25% for medical use, and 59% for both medical and recreational.

At nonalcoholic drink shop Generation NA, sales are "insane," owner Rob Theodorow says. The shop is raking in social media followers with jaunty political commentary.

But the looming THC ban has put him in a hiring freeze; he's cutting back on inventory and building a rainy-day fund. "The consumer demand is clearly there, and it's outside of our hands," he says. "For lack of a better word, it's like a complete mind f—."

What will people do after the ban?

"If they ban hemp, I'll just be straight: It's going to close us down," Mike Halsema says over the phone as he pauses in mowing his Clarks Hill lawn. He's one half of Halsema Hemp Farms, which grows, processes and sells cannabis as shea butters, honey and cannabidiol (CBD)-infused dog treats.

He contributes samples of his crop to the Midwestern Hemp Database, a cooperative research program that studies different strains of the cannabis

See CANNABIS, Page 3A

ELECTION 2026

Dispute may cloud Senate race in Alaska

Chamber majority could be unsettled for weeks

Jacob Bogage
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Alaska's Republican governor has ordered a state investigation of allegations in a New York Times report that Democrats recruited spoiler candidates in the state's U.S. Senate race, raising the prospect of a messy fight over a contest that could determine Senate control in the Nov. 3 midterm elections.

Alaska has one of about 10 highly competitive races that will decide control of the Senate, where Republicans hold a 53-47 majority. Democrats need a net gain of four seats, and a post-election dispute in Alaska could leave control of the chamber unclear for weeks.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy said on Oct. 28 that the probe would examine whether any laws were broken, posting on X that "the evidence will determine what happens next," hours after the Times reported that aides to Democratic candidate Mary Peltola worked to recruit two candidates who could siphon votes from incumbent Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan.

President Donald Trump told reporters on Oct. 29, "It's hard to believe that she could even be allowed to run. Frankly, I don't know how you can allow somebody like that to run. It's so unfair."

Trump for years has sowed doubts about the fairness of U.S. elections and even prior to the Times report had pushed the Justice Department to file a lawsuit seeking to preemptively block Alaska from seating Peltola, a former congresswoman, if she were to win the election.

The Times reported on Oct. 28 that Peltola aides worked with campaign lawyers and staff at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee to recruit two candidates who could siphon votes from the incumbent Republican Sullivan, including a retired teacher also named Dan Sullivan who is on the ballot. Peltola's former campaign manager, Elisa Rios, who was fired in August, told the Times that

See ALASKA, Page 3A

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Daylight saving time ended at 2 a.m. today. Remember to set your clocks back one hour.



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