



College football: 10 of the biggest midseason disappointments

SPORTS, 9A

The Marion Star

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Cannabis plants grow in a cultivation tent at Prolific Growhouse in Mount Holly on April 4, 2024.
CHRIS LACHALL/USA TODAY NETWORK ATLANTIC GROUP

Legalization eliminates some marijuana offenses in Ohio

Nancy Molnar
Canton Repository
USA TODAY NETWORK

Michigan may be Ohio’s biggest rival when it comes to the legal marijuana industry, thanks to lower prices.

But it’s not the only one.

The underground market — people growing and selling marijuana illegally — remains active in Ohio, law enforcement officials say, despite cannabis being readily available in joints, gummies, oils and other forms at more than 225 regulated dispensaries throughout the state.

Law enforcement agencies admit they are more focused on other illegal drugs such as fentanyl and heroin, but marijuana-related arrests — while significantly down from years ago when cannabis was illegal in Ohio — continue.

It raises the question of why people are still buying illegally when they don’t have to. Marijuana experts and law enforcement say perhaps because it’s cheaper or because people don’t want to step into one of the legal cannabis businesses.

“The answer is economics,” Morgan Fox, political director of the marijuana advocacy group NORML and an Olmsted Falls native, wrote in an email. “Establishing a legal, regulated market isn’t like flipping a switch; it is introducing new competition to a well-established, incredibly interconnected underground market. Most consumers prefer the quality, safety, and reliability that comes with the regulated market, but for a significant portion of consumers, price is the biggest determining factor for where they obtain cannabis.”

People still charged for illegal marijuana offenses

Marijuana is big business — whether it’s legal or not.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimated that 43.8 million Americans ages 12 and up used marijuana regularly in 2025. The survey also found that regular marijuana use surpassed cigarette smoking in the United States, while alcohol remains the most widely consumed substance, USA TODAY reported.

In Ohio, medical and recreational marijuana sales have topped \$4.2 billion since medical sales started in January 2019, according to state data.

“Illegal marijuana is still a problem, especially with people operating vehicles while impaired or transporting bulk amounts,” Lt. Bryan Sponaugle, commander of the Ohio State Highway Patrol’s New Philadelphia post, wrote in an email.

He wrote that he knows the illegal market is still a problem because the patrol continues to make busts involving large amounts of marijuana being transported on the highway.

Like Fox and Sponaugle, Canton Police Chief John Gabbard said the underground market exists because it’s less expensive.

“People still look for opportunities to obtain marijuana at a more affordable price,” Gabbard wrote in an email. “Illegal dealers will always find ways to market it to their customers so that it is more affordable than purchasing it at a dispensary.”

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Old Farmers’ Almanac’s 2026 winter forecast

Aaron Hughes
Canton Repository
USA TODAY NETWORK

Want a sneak peek into what Ohioans can expect this winter? The Old Farmer’s Almanac is already on it.

The publication released a long-term forecast for how wet and cold the winter will be across the United States and, according to the forecast, Ohioans will need their shovels this year.

“Winter won’t look the same everywhere this year. While much of the country is headed for a milder season, some areas will still see plenty of cold and snow,” Carole Connare, editor-in-chief of The Old Farmer’s Almanac, said in a news release.

Lower Lakes region

For those in Northeast Ohio and nearby, the almanac said difficult conditions are expected this year due to “above-normal precipitation and a classic winter January.”

Temperatures also are expected to be above normal, as well. The coldest period will be from early January to early February.

The almanac’s definition of “above normal” is relative to the area, according to the website.

Ohio Valley

For the rest of the Buckeye State, expect colder temperatures, a wetter eastern area and several snowy periods throughout the season.

Upper Midwest

The Old Farmer’s Almanac predicts milder months in the Upper Midwest to transition to colder-than-normal temperatures. Snow will be near or below normal in the region.

When is the first day of winter?

Winter officially will begin at 3:50 p.m. Dec. 21, which is the winter solstice.

How does the Farmers’ Almanac predict the weather?

According to its website, the almanac uses a mix of sunspot cycles, lunar position, tidal pull and historical pattern weighting to make its long-range forecast.

How accurate is the Farmers’ Almanac?

The almanac has been making forecasts since 1818. It reports 80% to 85% accuracy on regional outlooks.

Others might equate predictions made by almanacs to the accuracy of a flip of a coin.

A University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign study done in 2010 found that 51.9% of the monthly precipitation forecasts and 50.7% of the monthly temperature forecasts were accurate.

Reach Aaron at 330-580-8428 or ahughes@usatodayco.com. On X: [@AaronHughe2](https://twitter.com/AaronHughe2)

Election 2026: Who is running for state auditor?

Emma Wozniak
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ohio voters this fall will decide who should serve as the state’s financial watchdog, choosing between Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Democratic Maple Heights Mayor Annette Blackwell for auditor.

The Ohio auditor is responsible for reviewing financial records of all public offices and investigating fraud and corruption within public agencies. The auditor also sits on the seven-member Ohio Redistricting Commission, which draws lines for state legislative districts and can play a role in congressional redistricting.



Republican Frank LaRose and Democrat Annette Blackwell, right, are running for Ohio auditor in 2026.
PROVIDED BY CAMPAIGNS

Republican Keith Faber has served in the role since 2019 and is now running

against Democratic attorney John Kulewicz for attorney general.

LaRose, 47, is on his second, four-year term as secretary of state, and term limits bar him from running again. He ran for U.S. Senate in the GOP primary in 2024 but lost to Bernie Moreno. LaRose grew up in Northeast Ohio and later enlisted in the United States Army, serving as a Green Beret.

Blackwell, 64, has served as mayor of Maple Heights, a Cleveland-area city of roughly 23,000, since 2016, with her current term slated to end in December 2027. Before public office, she worked for companies including KeyBank, University Hospitals of Cleveland, Deloitte

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