

2026

# NATIONAL CANNABIS REPORT

From its establishment in 2023, the UNLV Cannabis Policy Institute has enjoyed a rapid trajectory to joining the national discourse on cannabis research, policy, and education. The first annual National Cannabis Report contains a snapshot of the federal landscape, valuable resources, economic performance, a comparison of state legalization approaches, and much more.

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## FEATURED STUDENT AUTHOR



### **Jordyn Sanders**

CPI GRADUATE ASSISTANT '25/'26

Jordyn Sanders is a doctoral candidate in Criminology and Criminal Justice at UNLV. As a Graduate Research Assistant with the CPI, her work focuses on cannabis regulation, federal–state policy conflict, tribal cannabis governance, and the intersection of cannabis markets and economic development. Her research examines regulatory design, public health implications, and industry structure across state and tribal jurisdictions, with an emphasis on evidence-based policy analysis.

*Additional research, writing, and design contributions were made by various students and support staff for this edition of the 2026 National Cannabis Report, including by Peter Smith ("Medical Marijuana Rescheduling Opens A Federal Path While Intoxicating Hemp Faces New Limits") and Natalie Symes (editing, copywriting, and design). We are thankful to these contributors for their thoughtful additions.*

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

From the time I left private law practice a decade ago to work on the framework around cannabis legalization in Nevada—first in the industry and then as a regulator—I have witnessed many twists and turns. However dynamic the industry has been in this time, I could not have anticipated its most recent developments, namely President Trump’s executive order expressing support of cannabis research juxtaposed by the New York Times editorial board issuing an opinion criticizing state cannabis legalization.

While the New York Times editorial board opinion is separate from the paper’s newsroom, we cannot overlook the impact of its February 9th opinion. The board expresses support for its own past pieces on cannabis legalization, but ultimately decides that legal sales of cannabis in the U.S. has resulted in a net negative. There should be discourse on the positives and negatives of cannabis legalization, but the article fails to take several important factors into account, including the extensive taxation imposed on the industry, which could be used to address public health impacts and spent on public health messaging, but often is not.

The article fails to address the extensive taxes that cannabis businesses pay to local, state, and federal governments. Most can agree that states with legal cannabis sales that collect revenue that would otherwise be lost to the unlicensed market, should also collect data on the impacts of legalization as well as fund public health education related to legalization. The industry doesn’t choose what initiatives its taxes fund. It is the duty of policymakers to fund public health initiatives and education around cannabis use, which exists with or without legalization. While the piece is an opinion, it carries great weight and should not fail to take into account the extensive taxes already paid by the industry, including the tax penalty under IRC § 280E.

Against this backdrop, the need for rigorous research, public education, and informed policy dialogue becomes especially clear—roles the UNLV Cannabis Policy Institute was created to fulfill. Some of the CPI’s work on this front includes hosting public education sessions, such as with the Cannabis Speakers Series, which highlight topics like industry, research, and gaming, and featuring cannabis thought leaders, legislators, and other stakeholders. In addition to its policy programming, which also includes webinar discussions on federal policy, rescheduling and social equity, the CPI hosts an annual Cannabis Policy Institute Symposium. The symposium brings together regulators, policy professionals, and other leaders from across the cannabis industry to discuss current cannabis policy and research topics. Thanks to the support of UNLV leadership, the institute’s Advisory Board, and UNLV’s Graduate College and Division of Research, the CPI has spent the time since its creation establishing a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to achieving its mission.



*Liana Currett*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
UNLV CANNABIS POLICY INSTITUTE**

# THE FEDERAL LANDSCAPE

Cannabis has been illegal or effectively illegal at the federal level for nearly a century, beginning with the *Marihuana Tax Act*, adopted in 1937. The Act imposed heavy taxation on cannabis and hemp for prescribing physicians, pharmacists and those involved in cultivation and manufacturing, and it punished violators with criminal penalties. Its steep taxes and strict enforcement made cannabis operations so unprofitable that the market ceased to function.

In 1968, 73 members of the United Nations, including the United States, adopted a global Single Convention for Narcotic Drugs. Two years later, in 1970, Congress passed the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act, consolidating numerous previous drug laws and adopting the policies agreed to under the Single Convention. Under the Act's second title, the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), restricted drugs are placed on one of five schedules, based on their potential for abuse and medical usefulness—a structure which loosely mirrors the Single Convention.

Cannabis was initially placed in the most strictly controlled category under both the Single Convention and CSA, though there was some expectation that it may be re-evaluated after further scientific study.<sup>1</sup> A National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse was convened to review the effects of cannabis, efficacy of laws, and its scope and use in the United States. After two years of study, it published a report recommending descheduling cannabis.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, cannabis remained on Schedule I on the CSA—a category reserved for substances that have “no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.”<sup>3</sup>

Prospective changes to cannabis's federal status are generally referred to in one of three ways:

- Rescheduling – Moving cannabis to a different scheduling category on the CSA
- Descheduling – Removing cannabis from the CSA
- Legalizing – Adopting a new federal policy that allows and regulates cannabis

Both descheduling and legalizing actions require Congressional approval, but the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) can reschedule cannabis using administrative procedures.

## Congressional Actions

In 2014, the U.S. Congress began using appropriations riders to prevent the DOJ from enforcing

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1 Egeberg, Dr. Roger O., Assistant Secretary for Health and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Letter to Congress. (Aug. 14, 1970).

2 National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse. “[Marihuana: a signal of misunderstanding.](#)” First Report. (Mar. 22, 1972).

3 Title 21 United States Code (USC) [Controlled Substances Act](#).

## POST-2012 ACTS, BILLS, AND ORDERS

2013		<b>Cole Memorandum</b> — <i>Author: Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole</i> A DOJ memo (rescinded in 2018) stating the federal government would focus its limited resources on eight specific priorities, making it stay out of state-legal programs.
2014		<b>Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill)</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. Frank D. Lucas</i> Established the first federal definition of industrial hemp as cannabis containing no more than 0.3% delta-9 THC. Authorized state departments of agriculture and universities to cultivate hemp for research purposes notwithstanding the CSA.
2014		<b>Rohrabacher–Farr Amendment</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. Dana Rohrabacher</i> Prohibits the DOJ from using funds to interfere with state medical cannabis programs, as long as individuals and businesses follow state law.
2015		<b>Compassionate Access, Research Expansion, and Respect States (CARERS) Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Cory Booker, Sen. Rand Paul, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Sen. Mike Lee, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, and Sen. Al Franken</i> Would have amended the CSA to allow states to set their own medical marijuana policies.
2018		<b>Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill)</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. K. Michael Conaway</i> Removed “hemp” from the definition of “marihuana” in the CSA, transferred primary regulatory oversight from the DEA to the USDA, established a framework for state and tribal production plans, protected interstate commerce, and etc.
2018		<b>STATES Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Elizabeth Warren</i> Would have allowed for the recognition of state laws legalizing cannabis through their legislatures or citizen initiatives.
2019		<b>Marijuana Justice Act of 2019</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Cory A. Booker</i> Would have removed marijuana from the CSA and addressed the impact of its prohibition on minority and low-income communities.
2019		<b>Marijuana Freedom and Opportunity Act of 2019</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Charles E. Schumer</i> Would have removed cannabis from the CSA as well as legalized it federally and created a Marijuana Opportunity Trust Fund.
2019		<b>SAFE Banking Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. Ed Perlmutter</i> Would have created protections for financial institutions that provide services to cannabis businesses as well as related service providers.
2019		<b>MORE Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Kamala D. Harris</i> Would have removed marijuana from the CSA and eliminated criminal penalties for manufacturers, distributors, or possession of marijuana.
2022		<b>Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Cory A. Booker</i> Would have removed cannabis from the CSA, allowed states to set their own policies, and established a federal regulatory framework.
2022		<b>Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research Expansion Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. Earl Blumenauer</i> Mandated the DEA establish protocols to license researchers studying marijuana and businesses authorized to produce it.
2022		<b>Bipartisan Safer Communities Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Marco Rubio</i> Required the FBI to contact local authorities for firearm buyers under 21, leading to the discovery of state-legal medical marijuana records; any such discovery triggered a mandatory denial of firearm ownership under the Gun Control Act.
2023		<b>SAFER Banking Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Sen. Jeff Merkley</i> Would have protected federally regulated financial institutions from penalties for providing services to state-sanctioned cannabis businesses.
2024		<b>DOJ/DEA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking</b> — <i>Sponsor: Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)</i> Initiated the reclassification of cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III of the CSA, called for a reduction of barriers limiting medical research into cannabis, and easing the regulatory burdens of businesses dealing with controlled substances.
2025		<b>PREPARE Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. David P. Joyce</i> Would have directed the U.S. Attorney General to create a commission to advise on the development of a regulatory framework modeled after Federal and State regulatory frameworks with respect to alcohol.
2025		<b>Evidence-Based Drug Policy Act</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. Dina Titus</i> Would have allowed the Office of National Drug Control Policy to conduct public policy analyses on state cannabis programs and sponsor medical research on the benefits of cannabis.
2025		<b>Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026</b> — <i>Sponsor: Rep. Tom Cole</i> Redefined hemp to close the THCA/Delta-8 loophole, effective November 2026, amending the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 by narrowing the 2018 Farm Bill’s definition of hemp.
2025		<b>Increasing Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research</b> — <i>Author: President Donald J. Trump</i> Executive order directing the DOJ to finalize moving cannabis to Schedule III under the CSA. Instructed the FDA to find a way to keep “non-intoxicating” CBD legal despite the new hemp ban.
2026		<b>AG Order No. 6754-2026</b> — <i>Author: Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice</i> AG Order placing FDA-approved marijuana drug products and marijuana subject to state medical marijuana licenses into Schedule III of the CSA. Establishes a DEA registration process for state medical marijuana licensees.

against medical cannabis operations authorized by states.<sup>4</sup> Further Congressional action has been attempted, but only one bill has been successful—the Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research and Expansion Act (H.R. 8454), which eased some restrictions on cannabis research.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the unsuccessful Congressional proposals include attempts to legalize cannabis and comprehensively reform federal laws. The proposals on the previous page provide some indication of what federal legalization may eventually look like. Incremental reforms have also been attempted, but none have been successful yet. These include proposals to:

- Expand banking within the cannabis industry
- Allow veterans to access medical cannabis
- Expunge state cannabis convictions

### **Administrative Actions**

After a review performed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) found credible scientific evidence supporting the use of marijuana to treat conditions such as anorexia, chemotherapy-induced nausea, and chronic pain, President Donald Trump signed an executive order in December 2025 that directed the U.S. Attorney General to expedite the process of moving marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III under the CSA. The order indicated the administration would collaborate with Congress to redefine hemp-derived cannabinoids and reassess the hemp ban. Specifically, they would consult the appropriate agencies to establish a regulatory framework, which would set an upper THC limit per serving and consider per-container limits and CBD-to-THC ratios.

In April 2026, the Department of Justice issued an AG Order placing FDA-approved marijuana drug products and marijuana subject to state medical marijuana licenses into Schedule III of the CSA.<sup>6</sup> The order created an expedited DEA registration pathway for state-licensed medical marijuana entities and clarified that qualifying state medical marijuana licensees will no longer be subject to IRC § 280E, although the order did not itself determine any individual taxpayer's federal tax liability. Importantly, the order did not federally legalize adult-use cannabis, remove all marijuana from Schedule I, or affect hemp or synthetic THC.

One of the primary practical impacts of rescheduling is the elimination of IRC § 280E. This section prohibits businesses that produce, transport or sell Schedule I drugs from deducting standard business expenses from their taxes. As a consequence, cannabis businesses have historically paid an effective federal tax rate of up to 70 percent even though they had legal status under state law. This has created a tremendous financial burden, particularly for small and equity oper-

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4 Congressional Research Service. "[Funding Limits on Federal Prosecutions of State-Legal Medical Marijuana.](#)" (May 14, 2024).

5 Rutgers Addiction Research Center. "[President Biden Signs Law Expanding Research on Cannabis.](#)" (December 2022).

6 Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice. "[AG Order No. 6754-2026.](#)" (April 23, 2026).

ators. Additionally, moving cannabis to Schedule III will significantly reduce barriers to medical and scientific research by easing regulatory hurdles for federally approved studies.

## State Cannabis Laws

State cannabis markets operate in silos, where each state's supply chain (from seed to sale) is contained wholly within that state's borders. This structure stems directly from a 2013 U.S. Department of Justice guidance document, issued when only Colorado and Washington had legalized adult use, which outlined enforcement priorities including "preventing the diversion of marijuana from states where it is legal under state law... to other states." Interpreted as a mandate for intrastate-only commerce, this guidance has led to the incorporation of such requirements into the legalization statutes of every state with a cannabis market. Critically, this state-level expansion was possible only because the federal government exercised discretion in its enforcement of the CSA, effectively tolerating regulated state markets that adhered to the core federal goals.

This fragmentation persists despite overwhelming public support for cannabis legalization, which shifted dramatically in the last two decades. While only 31% of Americans supported legalization in 2000,<sup>7</sup> in 2024 a full 88% believed it should be legal for medical or recreational use.<sup>8</sup> This is also reflected in state policy. As of February 2026, 40 states allow medical cannabis and 24 states, 4 U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia have legalized it for recreational use, meaning most Americans now live in a state with legal access.



PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNS THE 2018 FARM BILL.

## Intoxicating Hemp

In contrast to the tightly regulated state cannabis markets, a separate legal market emerged under a more permissive federal framework with the Agricultural Improvement Act ("Farm Bill"), signed into law in December 2018, which removed hemp from the CSA.<sup>9</sup> This change triggered the rapid proliferation of a national market for highly intoxicating hemp-derived products. These items, often inaccurately labeled, lacking basic safety standards, and

widely available to youth, created a significant regulatory challenge. Indeed, because hemp companies are not subject to standard industry controls, state-licensed cannabis businesses are forced to compete against these untaxed, readily accessible alternatives that are sold both locally and by mail. This blurry line contributes to consumer confusion about the difference between

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center. "Most Americans Favor Legalizing Marijuana for Medical, Recreational Use." Pew Research Center, (Mar. 26, 2024).

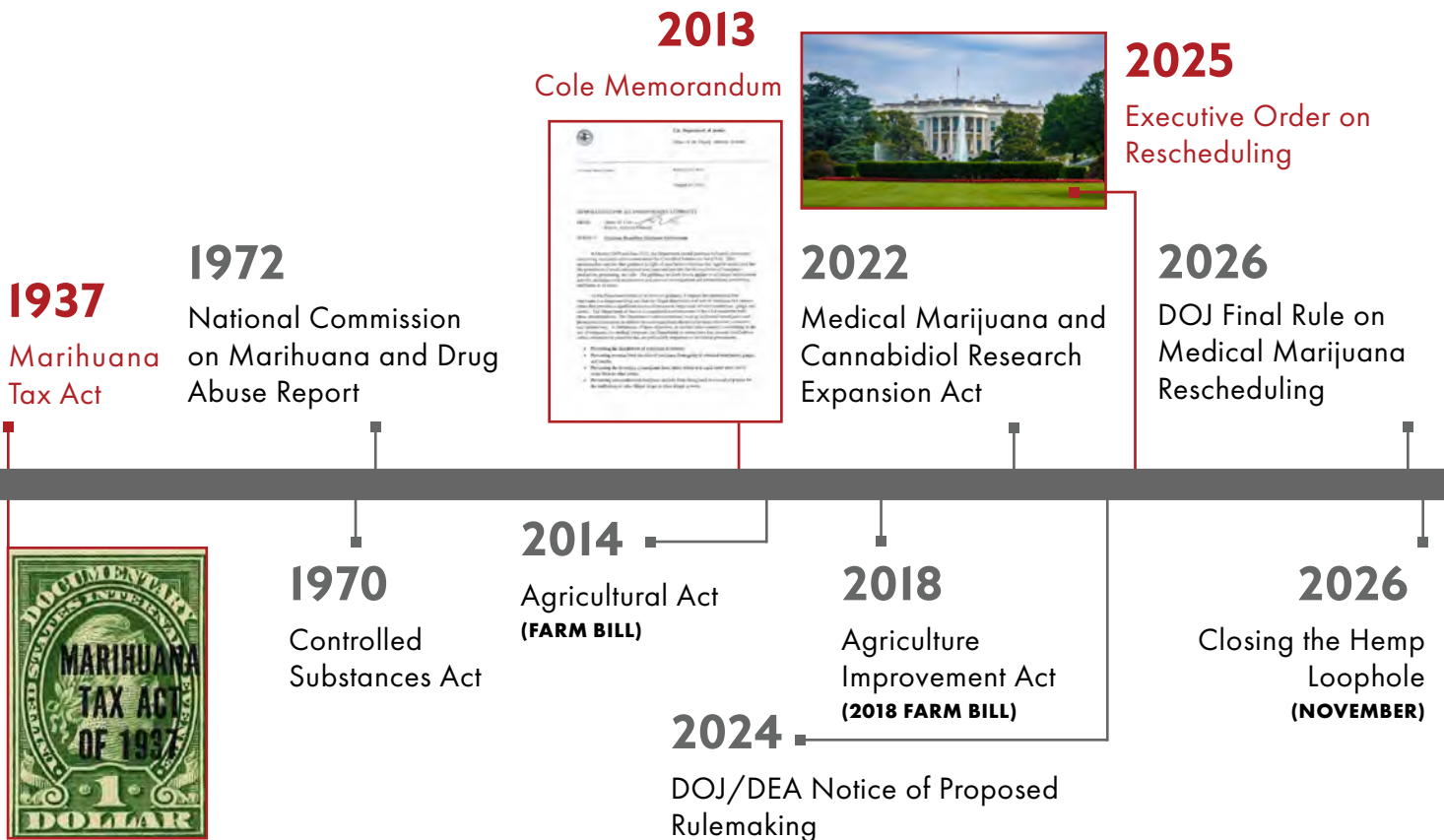
<sup>8</sup> Id.

<sup>9</sup> Dempsey, Christina. "Revisiting the Cole Memo." Cannabis Policy Lab, Through the Weeds, (Oct. 19, 2024).

cannabis and hemp, leading them to frequently fail to self-report their usage of each product correctly on state and national drug use surveys. The resulting unreliable data creates a major obstacle for researchers, who are struggling to untangle the distinct societal impacts of cannabis from those of hemp.

While the President’s 2025 Executive Order focused on rescheduling cannabis, Congress undertook a parallel legislative effort to redefine the legal landscape, passing a law in late 2025 to substantially tighten regulations governing hemp. Compliance now hinges on a total milligram cap (0.4 milligrams of total THC per container) replacing the previous standard based on concentration (0.3% Delta-9 THC by weight). The practical effect is a ban on most full-spectrum CBD products and all deliberately intoxicating hemp items. The legislation now contains an explicit ban on cannabinoids derived from hemp but produced through laboratory synthesis, such as Delta-8 THC and Delta-10 THC.

Despite its planned full implementation in November 2026, the impact of this new federal law is uncertain. Given that states already operate in defiance of federal law, under which recreational cannabis use remains illegal, many may similarly ignore the new, stricter limits on hemp. ■



# MEDICAL MARIJUANA RESCHEDULING OPENS A FEDERAL PATH WHILE INTOXICATING HEMP FACES NEW LIMITS

**By Peter Smith**

STUDENT CONTRIBUTOR

Major federal actions in late 2025 and early 2026 are reshaping the legal landscape for marijuana in the United States. Two of these actions open a door for medical research and use while others, including a Presidential Executive Office report and a federal action to become effective in November 2026, shut down a controversial loophole that allows intoxicating hemp products to be sold widely.

## **Executive Order Opens a Path for Medical Marijuana**

In December 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order<sup>1</sup> directing the U.S. Attorney General to expedite the process of moving marijuana from Schedule I under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) to Schedule III. Under the CSA, Schedule I classifies drugs considered to have “no accepted medical use” and a high potential for abuse, such as heroin. This classification has widely been considered inappropriate and has significantly limited research for many years. In contrast, Schedule III is the designation for drugs with a recognized medical use, a lower potential for

abuse, and the ability to be prescribed, such as ketamine or testosterone.

This shift relies on a Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) review, which found credible scientific support for using marijuana to treat conditions like chronic pain, nausea from chemotherapy, and anorexia. In the past, the Department of Justice (DOJ) was unwilling to effectuate rescheduling and demanded randomized controlled trials as a condition to support the change. The order aims to remove barriers, making it easier for scientists to study cannabis and for doctors to potentially prescribe it in the future. It specifically states that “[i]t is the policy of [this] Administration to increase medical marijuana and CBD research to better inform patients and doctors.”

<sup>1</sup> Exec. Order 14370 (2025). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/12/increasing-medical-marijuana-and-cannabidiol-research/>

## **Attorney General Order 6754-2026**

In late April, Acting Attorney General of the United States, Todd Blanche, issued an AG order<sup>2</sup> effectuating the rescheduling called for in the President's executive order. The AG order addresses international treaty obligations and federal regulatory law as well as rescheduling FDA-approved marijuana products and state-licensed medical marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III under the CSA. It also creates an expedited registration pathway for state-licensed medical marijuana businesses with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and clarifies their exemption from IRC § 280E, the section of tax code that prohibits businesses that sell Schedule I drugs from taking standard business deductions. Importantly, the order reduces barriers to research and allows researchers to obtain cannabis from state-licensed medical operators for research purposes. The order notably omits any reference to tribally-licensed cannabis operations while also seemingly opening up international import and export of medical marijuana, although this and other mechanisms of rescheduling will likely take time to manifest.

### **Legislative Act Closes the Hemp Loophole**

Just weeks before the President's executive order moving cannabis from a Schedule I to a Schedule III substance, Congress took separate legislative action in the form of a new law that substantially tightens the rules for hemp, targeting the market for intoxicating hemp-de-

rived products like Delta-8 THC. The 2018 Farm Bill legalized hemp (defined as cannabis with less than 0.3% Delta-9 THC by weight), which created a booming market for CBD. However, a loophole allowed companies to synthetically alter CBD from hemp to create intoxicating compounds that were sold over-the-counter everywhere from gas stations to grocery stores, often without age restrictions or testing.

The new law, set to take full effect in November 2026 after a one-year grace period, does two main things:

- It sets a new THC Limit, from a concentration-based limit (0.3% by weight) to a total milligram cap. Now, a legal hemp product can contain no more than 0.4 milligrams of total THC per container. This low amount effectively bans most existing "full-spectrum" CBD products and all intentionally intoxicating hemp products.
- In addition, it explicitly bans hemp-derived cannabinoids that are synthesized or manufactured in a lab, like Delta-8 and Delta-10 THC, closing the legal loophole they exploited.

### **Moving Forward**

The President's 2025 executive order indicates that the administration will work with Congress to update the statutory definition of hemp-derived cannabinoid products. The order also appears to indicate that the administration expects Congress to revisit the terms of the hemp ban. However, in 2026, the Executive Office of the President released a National Drug Control Strategy report outlining the adminis-

<sup>2</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice. "AG Order No. 6754-2026." (April 23, 2026)

tration’s approach to drug policy in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> While the focus of this report revolves around combating illicit drugs like fentanyl as well as tackling drug trafficking and addiction, it does highlight the administration’s growing concern related to psychoactive derivatives of hemp and emphasizes its consideration as a Schedule I controlled substance under the “Hemp Restriction regulations that are scheduled to take effect in November 2026.” This report adds significantly to questions on how the federal government will ultimately proceed with regards to hemp legislation.

While questions remain around the rulemaking process in light of the National Drug Control Strategy report and the AG’s order re-scheduling medical marijuana, the President’s 2025 executive order as well as congressional action on hemp will likely result in a medical pathway for products that meet FDA and DEA requirements as well as a state-regulated (though federally illegal) framework that may benefit from the removal of a significant tax penalty under IRS tax code § 280E. Questions will continue to surround the full impacts of these federal changes and potential congressional action. Whether state operators follow federal changes, such as hemp regulations, when many states currently do not adhere to federal law that maintains recreational cannabis as a Schedule I substance under the CSA, also remains to be seen. ■

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<sup>3</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States. “National Drug Control Strategy” (2026). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/National-Drug-Control-Strategy-2026-1.pdf>



# RESEARCH FUNDING

## Federal

The President's Executive Order moving cannabis from a Schedule I substance to a Schedule III substance under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) is a positive indicator for future cannabis research. To date, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has supported many cannabis research initiatives on the *Cannabis sativa* plant, its constituents, related compounds, and the endocannabinoid system. The NIH organizes its cannabis research into three reporting categories, including cannabinoid research, which represents total NIH research in the area, as well as subsets cannabidiol (CBD) research and therapeutic cannabinoid research. In addition to the NIH's commitment to cannabis research in the plant's various forms, the National Academy of Science has identified multiple areas for potential future research, including research on titration behavior.

The federal government also made forays into cannabis research before the plant's change in schedule under the CSA. For example, the government funded the National Center for Cannabis Research and Education (NCCRE) at the University of Mississippi in 2022. The NCCRE is also the only federally licensed cannabis grower in the United States.

## State

Federal funding for cannabis research is limited, but many states have invested in cannabis research both to inform policy development and in response to this funding need. Half of all states in the U.S. that have legalized cannabis have adopted measures allocating funding for research. The structure and amount of this funding varies between states, but generally involves either direct allocations to an academic research institution, or funding provided to researchers through a state-administered grant or other programs. Most of these funding streams are drawn from cannabis tax revenues. ■

## States Funding Cannabis Research<sup>1</sup>

State	Funding
Arizona	Up to \$25 million in clinical trial research grants distributed over five years.
California	\$2 million annually to UC San Diego's Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research, plus \$10 million annually for 10 years from 2016 to the DCC.
Colorado	\$1 million annually for FY 2016-2017 and FY 2017-2018 to fund the Institute of Cannabis Research at the University of Colorado, Pueblo.
Illinois	2% of cannabis tax revenues for research related activities, including to fund a Cannabis Research Institute
Minnesota	\$2.5 million annually to the University of Minnesota to fund a Center for Cannabis Research
Utah	More than \$13 million in fiscal years 2019-2023 by the NIH

<sup>1</sup> Balla A, Boyle RG, Dempsey C. State funding for cannabis research: an analysis of funding mechanisms and levels. *J Cannabis Res.* 2025 Mar 14;7(1):15. doi: 10.1186/s42238-025-00264-0. PMID: 40087685; PMCID: PMC11908053.



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recently, the New York Times Editorial Board issued an opinion expressing disappointment over the results of state cannabis legalization. However, the opinion overlooks the significant taxes cannabis businesses, though federally illegal, are paying to local, state, and federal governments. The opinion also ignores the responsibility of policymakers to adopt laws and regulations that are designed to achieve stated policy goals. For example, most states have imposed significant taxes on cannabis businesses and prioritized revenue collection in their design. Some states, such as Colorado, have prioritized data collection and public health campaigns more

than others. It is important to keep in mind that there are levers that could be pulled to prioritize health impacts versus placing sole responsibility on businesses that heeded calls from state governments to build state-legal organizations and generate tax revenue. The below policy recommendations take into account the current policy and political environment, providing a succinct guideline for immediate future steps to be taken to address concerns and further develop the cannabis industry safely nationwide.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

### ***Expand and Support Research***

A wide range of supporters, often from vastly different backgrounds, support increased research in cannabis. From President Trump to past presidents; the New York Times Editorial Board; the Congressional Cannabis Caucus; and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, there is consensus among groups with varying ideological backgrounds. Most recently, President Trump's 2025 executive order urged the rescheduling of cannabis in support of more, and more thorough medical cannabis research in the United States. Former President Biden also supported this expansion of research, namely through the signing of the "Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research Expansion Act." The act allowed a variety of groups, including institutes of higher education, access to marijuana and cannabidiol (CBD) for the purposes of research.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

### ***Do Not Slide Back Toward Prohibition***

Two years ago, it seemed unthinkable that there would be credible progress toward dismantling the legalization that has occurred in any of the 40 states that have legalized medical cannabis sales or 20 states that have legalized adult use sales. However, at least two states have ballot initiatives to repeal legalization and the New York Times Editorial Board has expressed widely discussed regret for cannabis legalization. Regardless of whether there are perceived negative consequences of cannabis legalization, youth use has not increased as a result of legalization. In the absence of data to support recriminalization due to increased youth use, policymakers should proactively design regulatory programs to produce desired public health and safety outcomes.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

### ***Fund Data Collection and Public Health Campaigns***

Cannabis businesses nationwide currently pay significant taxes to local, state, and federal governments with the expectation that these taxes will fund, at least in part, public health campaigns and data collection. People on all sides of this issue, from public health officials to anti-industry pundits and industry experts, would readily agree that this approach to tax revenue allocation is responsible and crucial to the health and safety of communities with legalized cannabis. ■

# 2025 U.S. CANNABIS MARKET SNAPSHOT<sup>1</sup>

By **Jordyn Sanders**

CPI GRADUATE ASSISTANT '25/'26

## Total U.S. Cannabis Sales

Recreational and Medical Retail

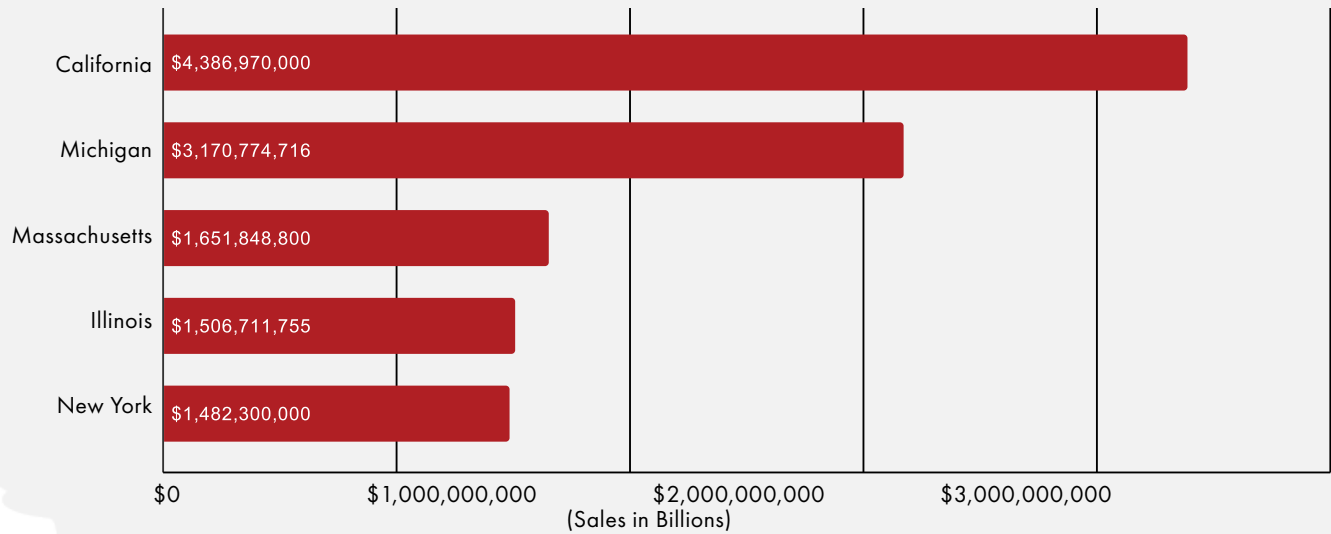
**\$25,876,328,100**

## Total Tax Revenue

Recreational and Medical Retail for Reporting States

**\$2,924,276,836**

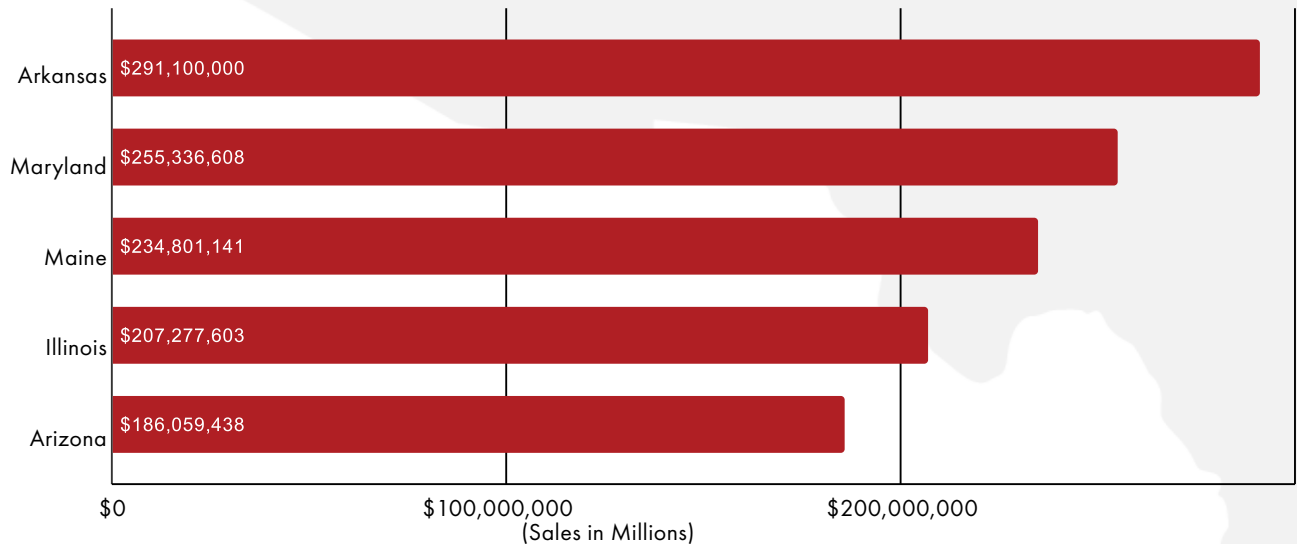
## Cannabis Recreational Retail Sales<sup>2</sup>



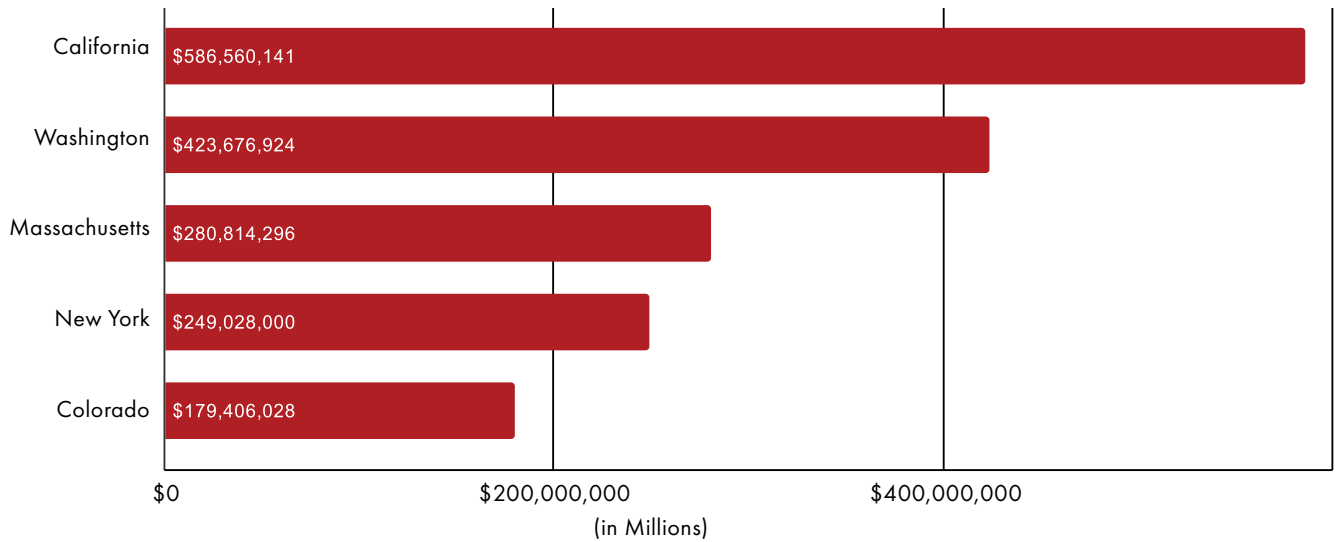
1 Data reflect 2025 reported adult-use and medical cannabis sales and tax revenue from available state reporting agencies. Reporting structures vary by state, so totals should be interpreted as reported market estimates rather than a complete national accounting.

2 California reporting is consolidated under MAUCRSA, so DCC/CDTFA do not publish separate medical sales totals.

## Cannabis Medical Retail Sales

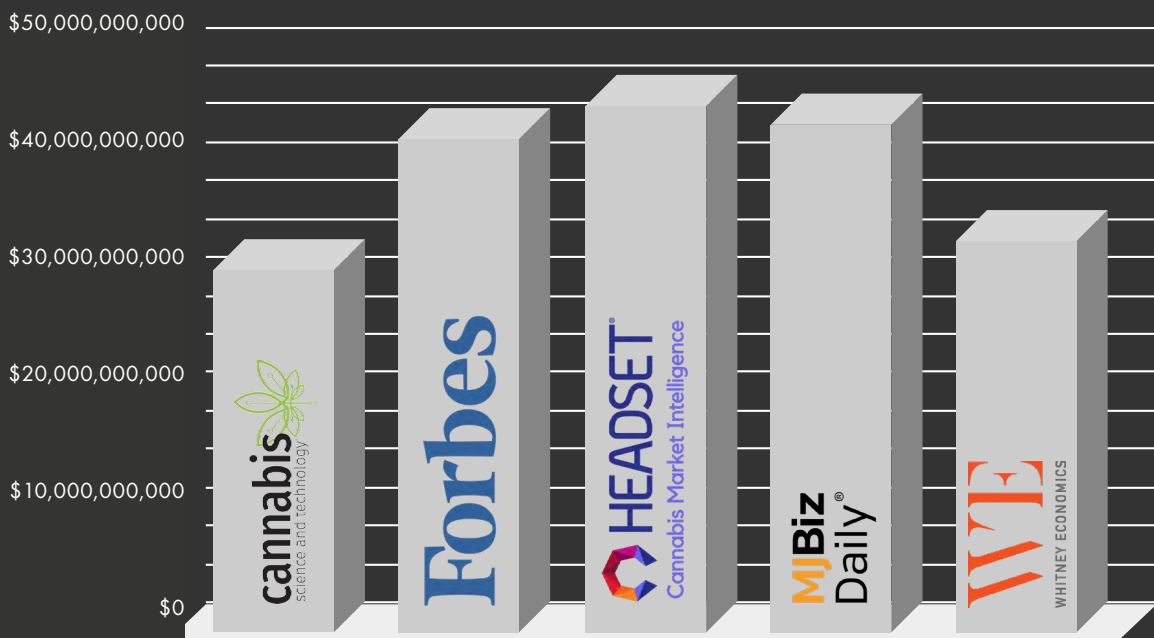


## Cannabis Recreational Retail Tax



The data in this Market Snapshot highlight significant variation in cannabis market size across states and continued growth in adult-use markets. California remains the largest legal cannabis market in the United States, followed by established adult-use states Michigan, Illinois, and Colorado. Emerging markets, particularly New York, are expanding rapidly as retail licensing increases and supply chains develop. In most jurisdictions with adult-use legalization, medical cannabis represents a much smaller share of total sales, reflecting a broader national shift toward recreational purchasing. ■

## Media Comparison of 2025 Cannabis Sales Forecasts



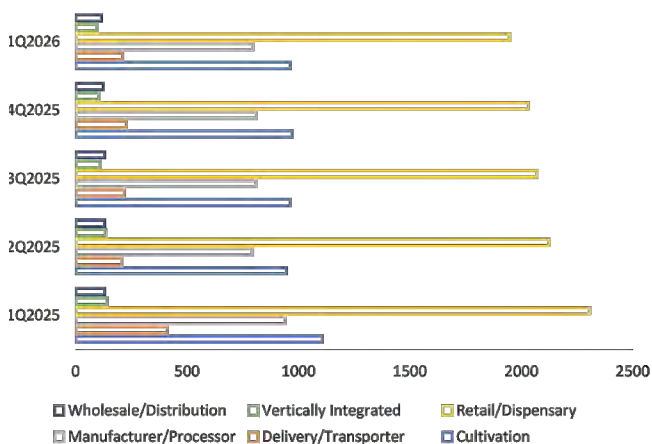
# NATIONAL CANNABIS LICENSING

According to data published in the CRB Monitor's first quarter 2026 report, "U.S. & Canadian Cannabis Business Licensing Activity: Consolidation in Maturing Markets, Opportunity in New," the first quarter of 2026 was significant for its characteristics of contraction and stabilization in North American regulated cannabis markets. Importantly, total active business licenses in the U.S. fell for the seventh consecutive quarter. The multi-year decline in new license approvals continued with slight elevation, signifying rebounds in some categories and states. New York, Texas, and Washington showcased a concentration of significant licensing activity. In contrast, established markets like California, Oklahoma and Michigan shed licensees.

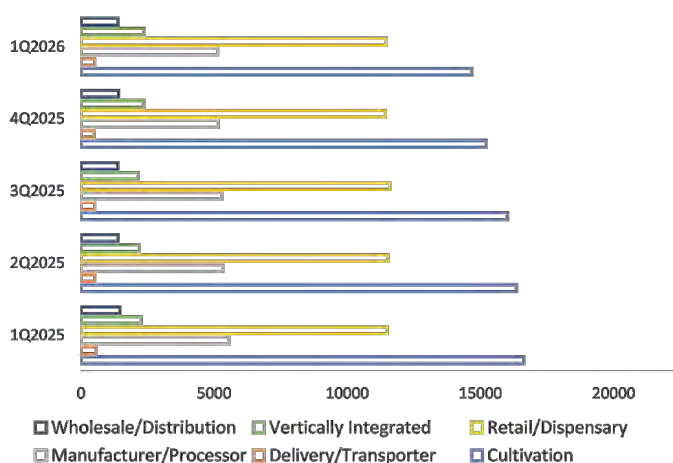
## Approved and Pending License Types

Approved and pending permit activity declined across all major license categories in the first quarter. The 4% overall decline marked the seventh consecutive quarterly drop in new business license approvals after peaking in the first half of 2024. In aggregate, new approvals were down 18% from a year ago.

### Approved/Pending Licenses by Type



### Active Licenses by Type



## 1st Quarter 2026 Highlights

Total active U.S. cannabis business licenses fell 1% in Q1 2026 to 36,169, marking the seventh consecutive quarterly decline and a 9% drop over the past two years.

Approved and pending licenses fell 4% to 4,175, an 18% decline from a year ago, reflecting consolidation in established markets.

New York accounted for over 85% of new applications in review nationally (4,522 applicants), yet processed only 46 applications during the quarter—just 1% of its backlog.



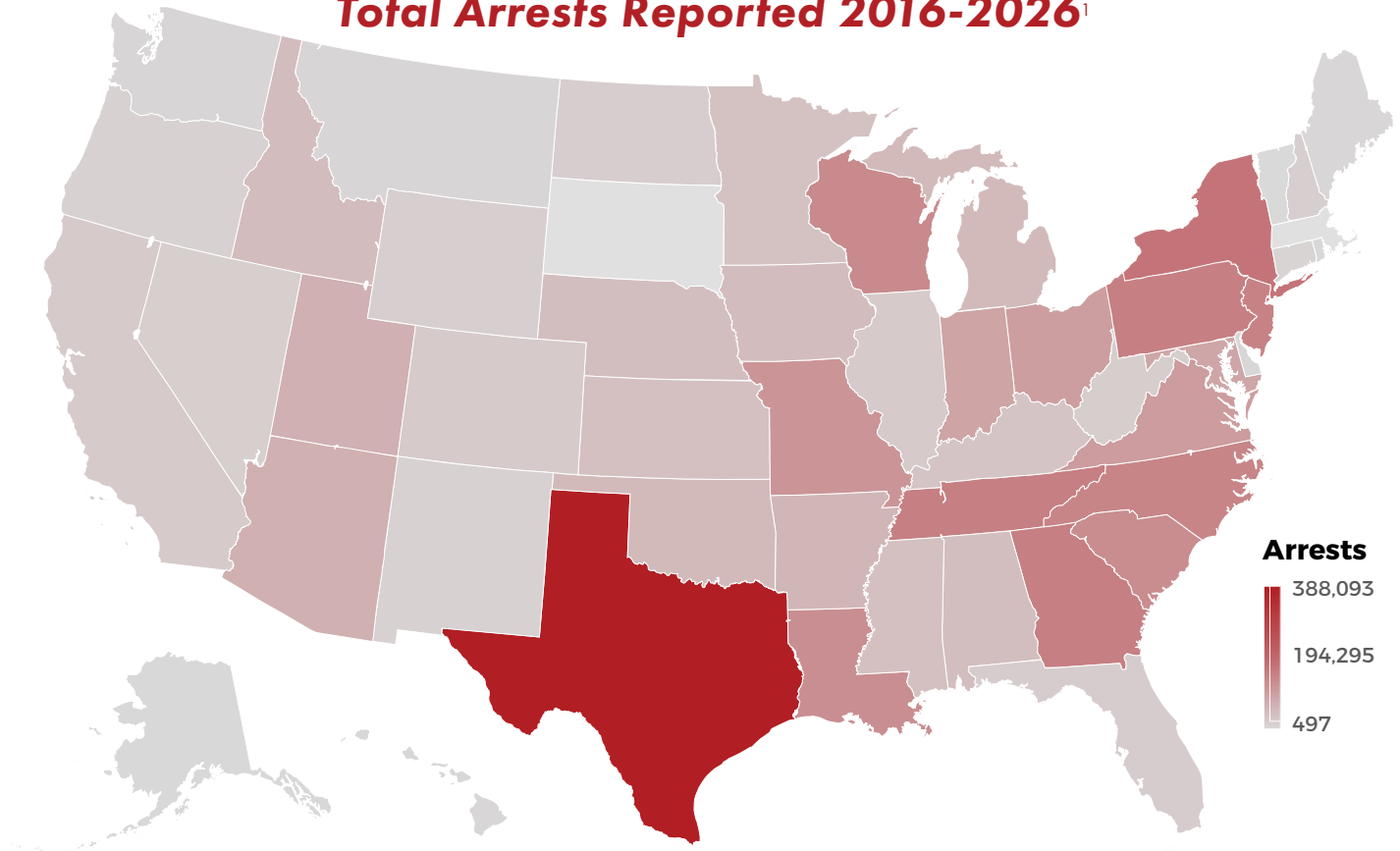
Data highlighted on this page is used with the permission of CRB Monitor, in reference to the organization's *First Quarter 2026 U.S. & Canadian Cannabis Business Licensing Activity: Consolidation in Maturing Markets, Opportunity in New* report.

# CANNABIS USE & POSSESSION ARRESTS BY STATE

By Jordyn Sanders

CPI GRADUATE ASSISTANT '25/'26

## Total Arrests Reported 2016-2026<sup>1</sup>



### Key Observations

- Arrest totals remain highest in large-population states
- Several states with legal cannabis still report substantial enforcement activity
- Regional variation suggests uneven enforcement patterns nationwide

### Arrest Totals

Texas — 388,093  
New York — 173,763  
Tennessee — 154,768  
Georgia — 154,603

<sup>1</sup> Source: State and federal arrest records compiled by the Cannabis Policy Institute. Totals reflect reported cannabis use/possession arrests, 2016-2026, per the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Arrest totals should be interpreted cautiously. Future analysis should compare arrest patterns across states in relation to legalization status, policy design, and enforcement practices. Because raw arrest totals are shaped by population size, future versions should also report arrests per capita to better compare enforcement intensity across states. New York's high total is notable and should be interpreted alongside population, legalization timeline, and state/local enforcement practices.

# CANNABIS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## ***Tribal Sovereignty***

Federally recognized Tribes are government entities distinct from state and federal governments. They are often led by a democratically-elected council and chair of the council. Many are governed by a constitution or charter. Congress maintains plenary power to pass laws that carry binding authority on Tribal nations.

Case law relating to sovereignty has developed over 200 years, beginning with Chief Justice John Marshall describing Tribes as domestic dependent nations—a concept that survives today. In general, state law does not apply to Tribes, but there are exceptions, such as Public Law 280. State, federal, and Tribal jurisdiction often necessitate legal and historical analysis.

## ***Tribes and Cannabis***

Many Tribal business operations are operated by a business entity, often an enterprise, established by the Tribe. Often, the executives operating the businesses answer to the Tribal Council. In the case of cannabis businesses within Tribes, some cannabis operations are owned by the Tribe and some are owned by Tribal members individually.

## ***Compacting and Development***

Compacts are not legally required for Tribes to operate cannabis businesses and not all Tribes

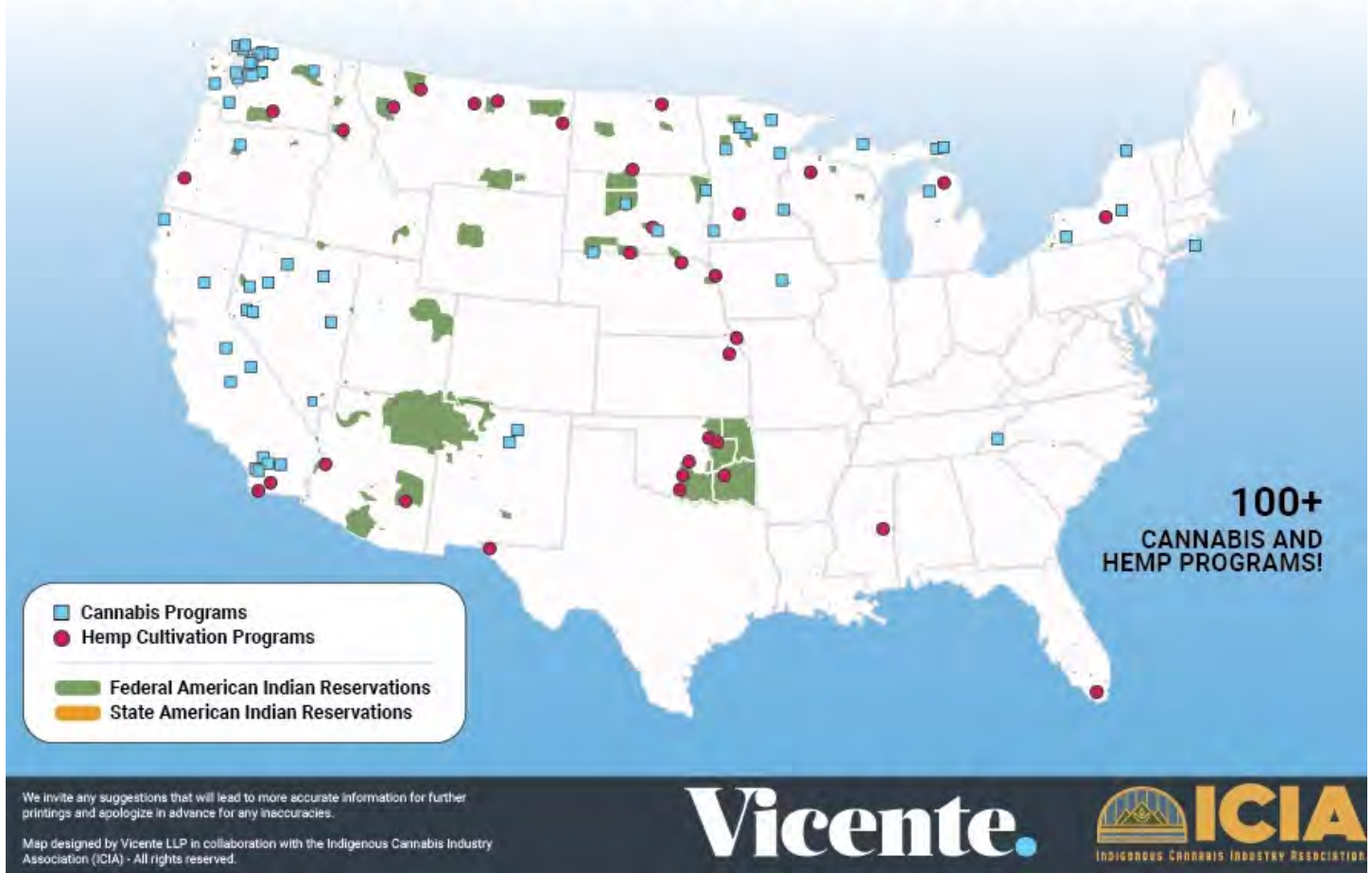


## ***Special Topics in Law: Cannabis in Indian Country***

Offered for the first time during the Winter 2026 session at UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law, *Special Topics in Law: Cannabis in Indian Country* examined the intersection of Tribal sovereignty and cannabis regulation.

Taught by Cannabis Policy Institute Director Riana Durrett, and attorney and professor Kostan Lathouris, *Cannabis in Indian Country* explored the historical, legal, and policy challenges Tribes face in navigating federal, state, and Tribal cannabis laws. Through selected book chapters, articles, and case studies students gained insight into the evolving dynamics of Tribal cannabis enterprises, their role in economic development, and national issues impacting cannabis business operations.

# TRIBAL CANNABIS AND HEMP PROGRAMS



1 Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association, Vicente LLP. (n.d.). Tribal Cannabis Map. Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association. <https://www.indigenousscannabis.org/tribal-cannabis-map>

enter such agreements with the state. Compacts do not govern the Tribes that are a party to them, but rather govern terms of the relationship between the Tribe and the state-licensed market. Compacts were adapted from Tribal gaming, which were developed as a pathway to resolve litigation and cross-jurisdictional issues. Compacts typically contain provisions relating to the taxes imposed on transactions and require that the tax revenue be spent on the welfare of the Tribe as Tribal sovereignty includes the right to determine taxes imposed within its jurisdiction. In fact, contrary to common belief, many Tribes are required to pay taxes similar to State rates and Tribal businesses do pay federal taxes. For example, in the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe any levied state tax is refunded to the Tribe and “any amounts so received by the Tribe will be used for Essential Government Services.” Similarly, any Tribal tax would also specifically go to “Essential Government Services” within the Tribe.

Tribes in other states either operate in the “Sovereign Market” only, such as in California, or native-owned operations are owned in the same manner as the state-licensed operations, such as in Oklahoma. ■

# FEATURED ARTICLES



## **[The False Promise of Rescheduling](#)**

**ROBERT A. MIKOS**

“Over the past fifty years, marijuana advocates invested considerable effort trying to reschedule the drug under the [CSA]. ...However, advocates had very little to show for all their efforts. The DEA rejected every petition to reschedule marijuana.”



## **[The One-plant Solution](#)**

**STRATEGIES 64**

“The United States has outgrown the artificial legal divide between ‘hemp’ and ‘marijuana.’ The federal government’s longstanding prohibition...have resulted in a fragmented and unstable cannabis policy landscape... .”



## **[State Funding for Cannabis Research: An Analysis of Funding Mechanisms and Levels](#)**

**AGNES BALLA, RAYMOND G BOYLE, CHRISTINA DEMPSEY**

“This paper examines cannabis research funding across U.S. states that have legalized cannabis for medical or adult (non-medical) use.”

## IN THE NEWS

### **[Cannabis Rescheduling Arrives, with Limits](#)**

**REUTERS**

“The DOJ’s final order marks a major federal shift by moving certain medical marijuana products to Schedule III, while leaving adult-use cannabis and broader state-federal conflicts unresolved.”

### **[Cannabis Presents Economic Opportunity for Tribal Nations](#)**

**VICENTE**

“While some observers believe that interstate commerce of adult-use cannabis might begin among bordering states, it might first occur among Tribal Nations of different states.”

### **[Forget the Trump-signed THC ban. In Texas, Hemp is Still as Legal as Ever](#)**

**HOUSTON CHRONICLE**

“The THC hemp business in Texas is a \$4.5 billion industry that supports thousands of businesses, most of them small and independent.”

# DR. ROBIN GOLDSTEIN'S 2025 STATE WEED RANKINGS

**By Robin Goldstein, Ph.D.**

DIRECTOR, CANNABIS ECONOMICS GROUP, UC DAVIS

The following rankings represent the educated, subjective opinions of U.C. Davis economist and Director of the Cannabis Economics Group, Robin Goldstein, Ph.D. These rankings, representing an assessment done for the 3rd Quarter of 2025, are part of a quarterly examination of states with legal cannabis sales. The rankings, which are updated each quarter, take into account which states are leading in cannabis revenue, retail pricing, and production efficiency as well as state-level policy, market levers and cost drivers, the rise of THC hemp products, and future federal scenarios, including rescheduling and descheduling.

## State and Year of First Legal Sales

## Capsule Summary

### 1. Oklahoma

2018 (M)  
Pop: 4 million

Some of America's lowest labor, electricity, and other input costs are keeping this territory fertile for weed producers. At some point, too many cannabis businesses entered Oklahoma. Just like everywhere else, some failed. But growing pains won't hold back the state's vast long-term potential. The runaway success of the no-nonsense approach to weed regulation taken by small-government states like #1 Oklahoma and #6 Arizona has left wonks in unranked New York scratching their heads and planning vacations to dude ranches.

### 2. Oregon

1999 (M), 2016 (R)  
Pop: 4.2 million

A 25-year history of legal weed has seeded a booming industry with some of the lowest prices in America, and a thriving hemp export market to boot. A recent ban on CBD-derived synthetics—including CBN, a fast-growing hemp segment—was a setback for hemp. But Oregon has also been passing laws making things a bit easier for the weed industry. For instance, licenses now only need to be renewed once every five years, and some new rules pave the way for interstate commerce once it's legal. The judicial overturning of a ballot bill that would have silenced cannabis businesses from opposing unions was also a big relief for the industry.

### 3. Michigan

2009 (M), 2019 (R)  
Pop: 10 million

Michigan's prices just won't stop falling. There will be some winners and some losers in this game, but the net result for the state is the only weed economy in the East that can compete with West Coast prices. Michigan producers—the ones that survive, anyway—will be well positioned to dominate retail shelves across the Midwest when interstate commerce arrives. In today's gated pre-interstate market, legal Michigan retail is raking in an impressive \$350 in annual retail sales per resident—more evidence that low prices are the key to a big legal industry.

### 4. California

1996 (M), 2018 (R)  
Pop: 39 million

California's excise tax increase to 19%, which took effect in July, was the last thing the state's cannabis industry needed. California weed is still some of America's cheapest, but for many licensed cannabis businesses, that's part of the problem: they were already struggling to survive amidst low market prices and some of the highest input and regulatory costs in America. More taxes was a low blow. Still, nothing will stop California from being a national and world leader in weed production, today and forevermore, with excellent quality, unmatched outdoor growing capacity, and a 50-year history of exporting all over the world.

## State and Year of First Legal Sales

## Capsule Summary

### 5. Nevada

2001 (M), 2018 (R)

Pop: 3.2 million

Nevada is the least populous state in the top 10, but has exciting potential as an interstate cannabis exporter, beginning with a business-friendly environment and very low prices for electricity, land, and labor. Wholesale greenhouse prices are low, a good sign for long-term competitiveness. Las Vegas also has a big opportunity in weed tourism, especially if regulatory changes can unlock new potential for on-premise retail. A recent dip in international tourist visitors has harmed Nevada more than most states. Let's hope it's a short-term blip.

### 6. Arizona

2011 (M), 2021 (R)

Pop: 7.4 million

Annual revenues in Arizona are down—way down, year-over-year—leading some to declare a “crisis.” But the total revenues are down because prices are so low, which bodes well for Arizona's future competitiveness in an interstate market. The further prices fall, the more competitive Arizona gets nationally. Wholesale prices for greenhouse-grown weed are as low as any state in America. High state cannabis taxes are a potential obstacle to success. Arizona is also leading the way among smaller western states in interstate hemp exports.

### 7. Washington

1998 (M), 2014 (R)

Pop: 7.8 million

Washington was one of the first states to legalize weed in the country. A robust consumer culture and healthy tourist demand have helped the state's 10-year-old recreational industry mature more than most. Investments in technology and increasing scale have helped bring outdoor flower prices near national lows, but high labor and utility costs will be a long-term challenge to success. There have been few notable developments in the industry in the past few months, which, compared to some other states on this list, is a good thing.

### 8. Colorado

2001 (M), 2014 (R)

Pop: 5.9 million

The Denver weed economy is reeling from an act of virtual self-sabotage from a local government that had otherwise appeared to support the industry: a more-than-doubling of the local recreational weed tax, from 5.15% to 10.65%. Labor costs in Denver were already among the highest in America. If Colorado wants to take advantage of its central role in America's weed economy—many of the leading lawyers and consultants are based here, for example, and Denver has perhaps the most successful (and maybe the only successful) weed consumption lounge in America—lawmakers would be better off lowering taxes than raising them.

### 9. Florida

2016 (M)

Pop: 23 million

For years, Florida's medical system grew but was limited by quotas and barriers that kept per-capita revenues below \$100 per resident. Then, in 2023–24, ambiguously legal “hemp” (see Section 5) busted open the market. With tax collections flowing, the governor supported the growing hemp industry by vetoing a bill that would have narrowed the definition of hemp. At least for now, THC manufacturing and drinks might have a sunny future in Florida. Texas' current regulatory uncertainty benefits Florida as a THC beverage exporter. On the other hand, decreasing numbers of tourists visiting the US hits Florida particularly hard.

### 10. Missouri

2019 (M), 2023 (R)

Pop: 6 million

Missouri moves up in the rankings because of its tolerance for an integrated hemp market. The state is a relative newcomer to legalization, opening its recreational system in 2023, but it's now tracking \$1.4 billion in annual sales (\$226 per state resident), with tax collections over \$200 million. Some of the nation's lowest electricity bills and low labor costs are already helping to bring high prices down. Missouri is growing at a breakneck pace on both the cannabis and hemp sides—something rarely seen anywhere in America. Missouri's legal cannabis revenue per capita is number two in America after Michigan.

### 11. New Mexico

2007 (M), 2024 (R)

Pop: 2.1 million

New Mexico has a small population but a productive medical weed industry that is just transitioning to a recreational system. Wholesale and retail prices are low and falling fast, and the state's high-altitude farmland is some of the cheapest in the country, with a statewide average market price of \$700 per acre. But the state did itself no favor by raising the excise tax from 12% to 13%. It might not sound like much, but every percentage-point tax increase on legal weed is another direct giveaway to the illegal weed market.

### 12. Texas

No legalization

Pop: 30 million

The people who came from all corners of the great state of Texas, cities and towns—veterans with PTSD, small-town hemp shop owners, moms of autistic kids, who all rallied together in Austin to fight the legislative assault on the state's \$4-billion-plus hemp industry—was a moving thing to see. Governor Greg Abbott followed Ron DeSantis in the annals of unlikely hemp folk heroes with a wee-hours veto of SB 3, but nobody knows what will happen next. If SB 5 (the latest version of the ban) passes, it will be the most devastating event in the history of the US hemp or cannabis industries, closing thousands of businesses and putting tens of thousands of Texans out of work. One economic trauma that's already a done deal is the illegalization of hemp vapes, via SB 2024, as of September 1, 2025. Levels of compliance and enforcement, though, are anyone's guess.

## State and Year of First Legal Sales

## Capsule Summary

**13. Massachusetts**  
2014 (M), 2018 (R)  
Pop: 7 million

Prices have fallen from low to wicked low—Filene’s Basement low. If interstate commerce were legalized today, the low-end Massachusetts retail price of \$10 for an eighth of flower would be absolutely competitive in a national market. Back in the day, when Massachusetts had the only legal recreational weed east of the Mississippi, plenty of New Yorkers would drive three hours up I-91 to buy weed in Northampton. Those days are mostly gone, and Connecticut recreational weed now stands in the middle. But as New York legal weed continues to find new ways to implode with amazing regularity, some budget-conscious drivers will still drive the extra hour to buy Mass. weed at half Connecticut’s prices.

**14. North Carolina**  
No legalization  
Pop: 10.8 million

There are no immediate signs that anyone’s going to bust up North Carolina’s high-volume THCa hemp market, and healthy state tax collections give lawmakers every incentive to support the weed industry. Anything could happen, but for now, North Carolina’s decisive non-action on hemp regulation has been a huge blessing for the industry, enabling the market to blossom even as other states shut theirs down. So exports are growing fast and hemp money is pouring in—to the benefit of farmers, the state economy, and government revenues. In Robeson County and other tobacco-growing areas, costs are low, the land is fertile, and farmers are looking for new ideas.

**15. Minnesota**  
2015 (M)  
Pop: 5.7 million

Minnesota is—or until now, has been—the North Star of THC drinks. Weed sodas, 10mg and 5mg, are the Jefferson and Madison Jefferson and Addison of its export future. With recreational legalization approaching, Minnesota’s hemp and cannabis systems have been set up with unusual balance and fairness—for instance, they’re taxed at the same rate. Unfortunately, that rate just got jacked up from 10% to 15%, a staggering blow. If not for this, Minnesota would have vaulted into the top 10. Instead, lawmakers have sent the hemp industry into stagnation overnight. The most immediate victims will be craft breweries, many of whom were saved by the THC boom.

**16. Montana**  
2004 (M), 2022 (R)  
Pop: 1.1 million

This dark-horse state debuted at #12 in the first edition of the rankings (Q2 2025), with some of the lowest retail prices in America and high per-capita revenue. But the bloom is now off the rose, and Montana’s weed industry is in free-fall. Prohibitionists are doing everything in their power to prevent cannabis from turning into a big source of revenue for Montana, from freezing new licenses with SB 27 to proposed legislation that would lower maximum THC in flower to 15% (a bizarre move that would eliminate most of Montana’s legal weed market). Montana is otherwise a business-friendly, libertarian-leaning state, so it’s odd to see the state’s Republican lawmakers imitating the heavy-handed blue-state regulators they so love to hate.

**17. Kentucky**  
No legalization  
Pop: 4.5 million

Kentucky’s medical marijuana rollout is going full steam ahead while its hemp industry continues to boom. The state has modest costs of doing business and cannabis input costs, and its labor force brings expertise in agri-business—expertise that has been in simmer mode since generations of tobacco farmers were paid vast sums to shut down their businesses a few decades ago. A major advantage here is the broadly permissive approach to hemp regulation. The wait-and-see approach could benefit Kentucky if federal laws turn toward hemp.

**18. Tennessee**  
No legalization  
Pop: 7.1 million

The THC hemp revolution was born here in 2022, when retailers began selling ordinary weed as “THCa hemp” based on a technical loophole in the federal definition in the US Farm Bill. Tennessee soon became America’s poster boy for hemp, with economic activity, jobs, and tax collections booming. Then, in mid-2025, lawmakers decided to shut it all down with HB 1376, a catastrophic bill that illegalized THCa flower and sent the whole state back to a virtual weed prohibition. Tennessee has now become the greatest riches-to-rags tale in American hemp history. A high-flying industry now lies in ruins, slain by the sword of lawmakers who support limited government and individual freedom—except when it comes to weed.

**19. Maine**  
1998 (M), 2021 (R)  
Pop: 1.4 million

Maine makes the top 20 for its long history (it was one of the first three states with any legal weed), inexpensive land, and the lowest medical prices in New England. But competitiveness in New England won’t count for much in a national price battle. Tax breaks on production and distribution could help protect state exporters. Rapidly falling prices in Massachusetts have created a very competitive New England cross-border market, but Maine is still holding its own, and it’s in the steady hands of competent regulators who understand the industry well and want it to work.

## State and Year of First Legal Sales

## Capsule Summary

### 20. Louisiana

Medical: 2016  
Pop: 4.6 million

Louisiana passed an emergency hemp law in May 2025 that knocked 10-mg THC beverages out of the legal market, preserving only 5-mg beverages. This isn't the end of the world, but it will result in a non-trivial shift of formerly legal hemp to the illegal market. Smokable hemp is banned, but still widely available at convenience stores and bodegas. In an interstate market, Louisiana still has a bright future, however, and will have significant potential in weed manufacturing and exporting due to its very low labor, land, and energy costs.

### 21. Vermont

2004 (M), 2022 (R)  
Pop: 650,000

Challenges for Vermont include high regulatory costs for all businesses and a harsh growing climate for weed. But the state has rapidly falling wholesale prices, a weed-friendly population, and a culture of buying local. Cannabis clubs could help some smaller farms cultivate long-term direct-to-consumer sales relationships with local customers who visit their farms regularly. With legal interstate shipping, club membership could expand to include out-of-state tourists. A recent improvement has been enabling recreational stores to sell medical weed.

### 22. New Jersey

2012 (M), 2022 (R)  
Pop: 9.5 million

New Jersey is fighting and clawing its way up the charts, and breaks into the rankings for the first time with impressive—and impressively growing—legal retail sales. The costs are high and the bureaucracy is dense, but the state's outdoor growing climate is a Mediterranean-ish dark horse, as it is for wine. More importantly, the New Jersey government seems to harbor a real desire to support weed as a serious industry, in line with healthy consumer demand across the state. Recent regulations have opened the door for on-premise consumption, Early sales are strong and growing. Plus, every legal weed meltdown that happens in New York—it seems like an almost-monthly occurrence these days—only helps New Jersey.

### 23. Puerto Rico

2017 (M)  
Pop: 3.2 million

You'd think Puerto Rico would be set up for weed business success. It's got a perfect growing climate, America's lowest labor costs, healthy consumer demand, and vast farmer know-how. Working against all this, though, is a government that seems dead-set on keeping business out of the legal market. Retail establishments are scarce; and, incredibly, for a region with such sparse coverage, there's now a new moratorium on applications for new licenses, sending Puerto Rico's ranking into free-fall. The government's proposed solution for the sky-high prices at the few existing retail establishments, meanwhile? Wholesale price controls—a policy idea that has failed everywhere in the world that it's ever been tried since the dawn of recorded history.

### 24. Illinois

2014 (M), 2020 (R)  
Pop: 12.7 million

THC hemp beverage sales are through the roof in Illinois. Per capita, only Minnesota does better. Beer sellers are seeing a huge THC boom, going from a non-trivial segment of the retail market to a big and hugely relevant one. Meanwhile, in the recreational cannabis segment, retail prices remain among America's highest—think \$60 eighths, after tax—keeping illegal weed in the driver's seat. Nonetheless, the sheer size of the state economy and strength of consumer demand, in the long run, could eventually bring Illinois prices back down from the stratosphere. And the co-existence of cannabis and hemp economies is a rarity among licensed recreational weed states.

### 25. Connecticut

2015 (M), 2022 (R)  
Pop: 3.6 million

Connecticut consumers are willing to spend plenty of money on weed. But will they spend it on Connecticut weed? Finally, the answer is drifting toward yes, with healthy growth in recreational retail coverage. Playing a big role in this has been no-nonsense regulators who are looking to streamline the system, modify rules in reasonable and helpful ways (for instance, recently increasing potency caps), and reduce the costs of being legal. This is exactly what the weed industry needs in the cutthroat Northeast, where Massachusetts prices have fallen off a cliff. Connecticut is also a national leader in regulatory transparency.

Scan the QR code or [visit linktr.ee/CPIatUNLV](https://linktr.ee/CPIatUNLV) to learn more about Dr. Robin Goldstein's weed rankings and the *High Marks: Dr. Robin Goldstein's State Weed Rankings* podcast, a quarterly discussion of updated weed rankings with hosts Dr. Goldstein and CPI Director Riana Durrett as well as a special guest.



# ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT



## ***Cannabis Regulators Association***

The Cannabis Regulators Association (CANNRA) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that brings together government agencies responsible for regulating cannabis, cannabinoids, and hemp. The association's members include agencies from more than 45 U.S. states and territories along with international partners, and this network will soon be joined by eligible Tribal and Indigenous regulatory bodies. CANNRA is not an advocacy group and takes no formal position on legalization. Its mission is to connect, educate, and support governments in order to safeguard public health and consumer protection. Through committees addressing everything from licensing and social equity to lab safety, it serves as a central hub for unbiased information.



## ***Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association***

The Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association (ICIA) exists to promote the exploration, development, and advancement of the cannabis industry for the benefit of all Indigenous communities. Working directly with local representatives, the ICIA is dedicated to the advocacy and empowerment of Indigenous cannabis businesses, influencers, and aspiring entrepreneurs along with being a conduit of connection and data for Indigenous Nations, pushing towards a vision of an equitable, just, and sustainable Indigenous cannabis economy.



## ***Institute of Cannabis Research***

### **COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY PUEBLO**

The Institute of Cannabis Research (ICR) at Colorado State University Pueblo is Colorado's official entity for advancing scientific knowledge about cannabis. It was established in 2015 with a primary mission to provide the public with objective, unbiased facts regarding cannabis biology and economic impacts, while utilizing rigorous clinical studies to deliver evidence-based data on health outcomes and safety. The ICR's diverse role includes conducting clinical and biotechnological research, managing state funds from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund, and advising on higher education curricula. The institute sponsors the peer-reviewed Journal of Cannabis Research and hosts the annual Cannabis Research Conference.

## ***Johns Hopkins Cannabis Science Laboratory***

### **JOHNS HOPKINS BEHAVIORAL PHARMACOLOGY RESEARCH UNIT**



The Johns Hopkins Cannabis Science Lab (CSL) unifies two decades of pioneering faculty cannabis research, creating a dedicated center to meet the growing demand for rigorous, evidence-based science. Led by Professor Ryan Vandrey, its mission is to conduct objective research that informs public health, medical practice, and policy. Funded entirely by federal grants, industry contracts, and donations, the lab critically evaluates the safety and therapeutic potential of cannabinoids, as well as the accuracy of information provided on commercial product labels. It produces high-impact studies, including its own foundational work on dose standardization, the National Cannabis Study tracking 10,000 participants, and sophisticated performance testing using driving simulators to assess impairment.

# NATIONAL CONFERENCES



## **Cannabis Policy Institute Symposium**

**LAS VEGAS, NV | DECEMBER 2026**

The CPI hosts a Cannabis Policy Institute Symposium annually. In addition to experts on key cannabis policy issues, the symposium assembles stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers from Nevada and across the United States. The event provides a platform for collaborative conversations that promote opportunities to drive advancements in cannabis policy and research.

## **Cannabis Regulators Association Annual Meeting**

**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK | JUNE 9-10, 2026**

CANNRA brings together a diverse array of national and international stakeholders in cannabis and cannabinoid policy, representing a range of perspectives and opinions, to engage in discussions with CANNRA member regulators and other attendees on cannabis and cannabinoid regulatory and policy topics.

## **Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association Policy Summit**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. | ANNUALLY**

Indigenous leaders, innovators, and knowledge keepers unite to advance the cannabis and hemp industries through sovereignty, equity, and sustainability during the annual ICIA Policy Summit. The summit is a call to action to dismantle systemic barriers, transcend borders, and uplift Indigenous voices at the forefront of plant medicine.



## **MJBiz Conference**

**LAS VEGAS, NV | DECEMBER 1-4, 2026**

MJBizCon is the largest B2B cannabis industry event, bringing together entrepreneurs, retailers, investors, and cannabis professionals from around the world. Whether you're looking to scale your business, make informed business decisions, source products and services, or identify emerging market trends, MJBizCon is where the global cannabis industry comes to connect and grow.

## **National Cannabis Research Conference (NCRC)**

**SAN DIEGO, CA | OCTOBER 19-21, 2026**

The NCRC is an annual scientific meeting focused on advancing cannabis science, encompassing both hemp and marijuana. The NCRC unites leading researchers, innovators, and industry stakeholders, embracing all dimensions of diversity. The conference is a multidisciplinary conference exploring the latest developments in cannabis science and innovation for applications in medicines, food, materials, and textiles.

# SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT



## **Christina Dempsey**

### **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CANNABIS CONTROL**

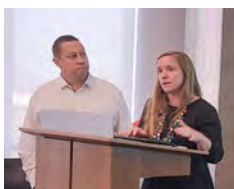
Christina Dempsey serves as the Deputy Director of Government Affairs for the California Department of Cannabis Control (DCC). Dempsey's expertise stems from her tenure as the DCC's first Policy & Research Director and nearly six years of service as a state regulator. She earned two Awards for Extraordinary Service: for her leadership during the EVALI health crisis, and for the 2017 launch of the state's manufacturing regulatory program. Today, she is a recognized authority, having testified before the California State Senate and authoring the publication *Through the Weeds*.



## **Dr. Cerina Dubois**

### **JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY**

Cerina Dubois, Ph.D. is a postdoctoral scholar specializing in psychiatry and public health at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Dubois serves on the Steering Committee for the National Cannabis Study, a landmark project funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) involving more than 10,000 patients. Dr. Dubois previously completed her Ph.D. at Northwestern University, where her research examined whether cannabis could directly substitute for opioids in managing chronic pain and improving quality of life. She also spent years at the University of Alberta, Canada, analyzing data from the country's largest epidemiological cohort of medical cannabis users.



## **Dr. Rochelle Hines & Dr. Dustin Hines**

### **UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

Rochelle Hines, Ph.D. and Dustin Hines, Ph.D. are neuroscientists and Associate Professors of Psychology at UNLV. They co-direct UNLV's Hines Group Comprehensive Neuroscience Lab as well as hosting "The Chemical Collective" podcast. Most recently, the Hines Group has focused its work on cannabinoids, specifically their effects/actions on neuromodulation. This research centers around the possible clinical applications of cannabis in epilepsy and other nervous system disorders. The lab is known for its study of non-neuronal (glial) cells in the processing of information for behavioral output.

Separately, Dr. Rochelle Hines' research focuses on the brain's calming circuits to understand conditions like autism spectrum disorders, schizophrenia, and developmental epilepsies. Dedicated to professional mentorship, she actively promotes diversity within the STEM workforce, guiding a diverse group of students in advanced biomedical research. Dr. Dustin Hines' research revolves around examining brain function, looking at cell interaction and this influence on behavior as well as on the central and peripheral nervous system.



## **Mary Jane Oatman**

### **INDIGENOUS CANNABIS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

The Executive Director and founder of the ICIA, Mary Jane Oatman is an enrolled member of the Nez Perce Tribe and descendant of the Delaware Tribe. Oatman is dedicated to reclaiming Indigenous cultures and restoring traditional economies in hemp and cannabis, working for her Tribe and other communities to advocate to state and federal agencies to protect Tribal sovereignty and to ensure more effective government-to-government relationships.

# ABOUT THE CPI

The Cannabis Policy Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas is dedicated to the development and advancement of cannabis research, policy, and education. By engaging with a range of stakeholders and community partners, the CPI is developing informed approaches to cannabis policy, expanding and coordinating educational opportunities, and supporting and promoting research and policy development.

## *What we're working on...*

### INFORMING POLICY

- Cannabis Speaker Series
- Cannabis Policy Symposium
- Free, live webinars on cannabis law, economics, reform, medical applications, etc.
- Publish articles and reports
- Establish connections with cannabis institutes and centers nationwide
- Participate in national conferences

### RESEARCH SUPPORT

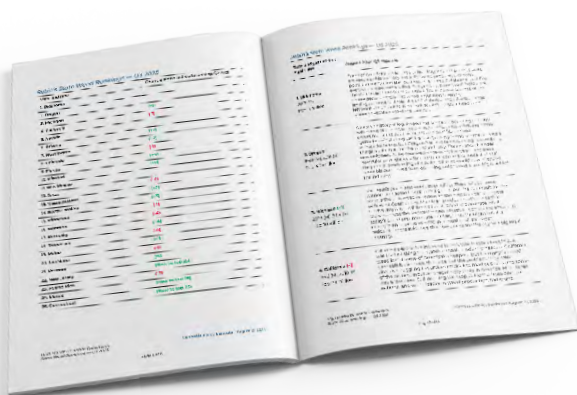
- Spearhead and conduct research on cannabis and gaming behaviors
- Explore the potential relationship between the gaming and cannabis industries
- Affiliate Faculty Program
- Disseminate cannabis research information
- Collaborate on grant proposals

### EDUCATION

- Work with qualified cannabis educators to expand cannabis course offerings
- Supervise and mentor graduate and undergraduate students across various disciplines
- Host an annual Student Showcase of cannabis-related research
- Develop groundbreaking cannabis curriculum

As part of its ongoing mission, the CPI supports and publishes reports on relevant policy issues, including:

- *1,500 Foot Wall: Barriers Between Cannabis and Gaming in Nevada and the Potential for Integration*
- *Where Will Weed Win?*
- *Nevada Cannabis Report: An Examination of the Policy Environment, Market Factors and Stakeholder Views*
- *Overview of the 2024 Cannabis Economy*
- *A Review of the Present THC Beverage Market*
- *Cannabis Marketing: Challenges and the Path Forward*



# RESOURCE INDEX

Scan the QR code to access the Resource Index online, learn more, and visit websites for each indexed resource.



## ACADEMIC JOURNALS

### [Cannabis](#)

An open-access, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the multidisciplinary scientific study of cannabis.

### [Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research](#)

A premier peer-reviewed journal focused on the scientific, medical, and psychosocial exploration of cannabis and cannabinoids.

### [Journal of Cannabis Research](#)

An open-access, interdisciplinary journal covering all scientific and societal aspects of cannabis, from biology to public policy.

### [Medical Cannabis and Cannabinoids](#)

A peer-reviewed journal dedicated to exploring all aspects of the medical uses of cannabis and cannabinoids.

## GOVERNMENTAL DATA SOURCES

### [CDC - Cannabis](#)

The CDC's internal search portal for all cannabis-related content, filterable by date, topic, and audience.

### [CDC - Cannabis Facts and Sheets](#)

A variety of information sources to monitor the prevalence and trends of cannabis use in the United States.

### [CDC - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(BRFSS\)](#)

The world's largest continuous health survey system, providing state-level data on health risk behaviors, including cannabis use.

### [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

The federal agency responsible for behavioral health, providing data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) on substance use and mental health.

### [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

The federal government's primary source for national demographic and economic data, which can be filtered for topics related to cannabis, marijuana, and hemp.

### [USDA's National Hemp Reports](#)

Official U.S. Department of Agriculture surveys and reports on the acreage, production, price, and value of the domestic hemp industry.

## MARKET INTELLIGENCE & DATA

### [Arcview Group](#)

A market research and financial services firm providing insights and analysis for cannabis industry investors and companies.

### [Brightfield Group](#)

A market research firm specializing in consumer insights and predictive analytics for the CBD and wellness cannabinoids market.

### [Business Decision Data Analytics \(BDSA\)](#)

A cannabis market research firm that provides point-of-sale data, consumer surveys, and forecasts for industry performance.

### [Business Decision Data Analytics \(BDSA\) Market Intelligence & National Cannabis Industry Association \(NCIA\)](#)

A partnership providing members of the National Cannabis Industry Association with access to BDSA's market dashboards and sales data.

### [Cannabis and Health Research Initiative's Repository](#)

Central archive for de-identified research data and tools on medicinal cannabis, designed to support standardized scientific studies on its health impacts.

# RESOURCE INDEX

## [Cannabis-Related Business \(CRB Monitor\)](#)

A corporate intelligence database that helps financial institutions identify, assess risk, and ensure compliance with cannabis-related businesses.

## [Headset](#)

A real-time cannabis analytics platform that aggregates and normalizes point-of-sale data from thousands of retailers in the U.S. and Canada.

## [New Frontier Data](#)

A cannabis market research and data analytics firm offering industry reports, forecasts, and economic insights.

## NATIONAL CANNABIS-RELATED INSTITUTES

### [Botanical Medicinal Research & Education Consortium \(University of South Florida\)](#)

### [Cannabis Policy Institute \(UNLV\)](#)

### [Cannabis Research & Policy Project \(CO School of Public Health\)](#)

### [Cannabis Research Institute \(University of Illinois\)](#)

### [Center for Cannabis, Cannabinoids, and Addiction \(Indiana University Bloomington\)](#)

### [Center for Cannabis and Natural Product Pharmaceuticals \(Penn State\)](#)

### [Center for Cannabis Policy, Research, and Outreach \(WSU\)](#)

### [Center for Cannabis Research \(UW\)](#)

### [Center for Medical Cannabis Research \(University of Utah Health\)](#)

### [Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research \(UCSD\)](#)

### [Consortium for Medical Marijuana Clinical Outcomes Research \(Florida\)](#)

### [Global Hemp Innovation Center \(Oregon State University\)](#)

### [Institute of Cannabis Research \(CSU, Pueblo\)](#)

### [Johns Hopkins Cannabis Science Laboratory \(Johns Hopkins University\)](#)

### [Lambert Center for the Study of Medicinal Cannabis & Hemp \(Thomas Jefferson University\)](#)

### [Medical Cannabis Research Center \(Drexel University\)](#)

### [Michael G. DeGroote Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research \(McMaster University\)](#)

### [MUSC Cannabinoid Research Collaborative \(Medical University of South Carolina\)](#)

### [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health \(NIH/NCCIH\)](#)

### [National Center for Cannabis Research and Education \(University of Mississippi\)](#)

### [Research Society on Marijuana \(RSM\)](#)

### [Systematically Testing the Evidence on Marijuana \(VA/OHSU\)](#)

### [UCLA Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoids \(UCLA\)](#)

### [University of Minnesota School of Public Health Cannabis Research Center \(University of Minnesota\)](#)

### [Yale Center for the Science of Cannabis and Cannabinoids \(Yale\)](#)

# RESOURCE INDEX

## RESEARCH & POLICY RESOURCES

### [Monitoring the Future \(MTF\)](#)

A long-term, NIH-funded study surveying adolescents and adults to track trends in substance use, attitudes, and behaviors in the United States.

### [National Academies - Cannabis Policy Impacts Public Health and Health Equity Book](#)

A report that recommends federal action (through research, best practices, and surveillance) to address the public health and equity harms caused by inconsistent state-led cannabis legalization.

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A report that recommends federal action (through research, best practices, and surveillance) to address the public health and equity harms caused by inconsistent state-led cannabis legalization.

### [National Center for Cannabis Research and Education \(NCCRE\)](#)

A state-mandated research center at the University of Mississippi that conducts evidence-based cannabis research and serves as a policy clearinghouse.

### [National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\) Database](#)

A CDC-funded, searchable database maintained by a nonpartisan NGO that tracks enacted state cannabis legislation across the U.S.

### [Resource Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research \(R3CR\)](#)

A federally funded hub providing regulatory guidance, research support, and quality standards to help scientists navigate cannabis research barriers.

## TRADE & MEDIA RESOURCES

### [Cannabis and Health Research Initiative \(CHRI\)](#)

A collaborative research platform between Johns Hopkins University and Realm of Caring that collects data on patient outcomes from medicinal cannabis use.

### [Cannabis & Tech Today](#)

A quarterly trade publication focusing on technology, business innovation, and culture within the cannabis industry.

### [Cannabis Industry Insights](#)

A legal blog from the law firm Blank Rome providing analysis on corporate, regulatory, and financial developments impacting cannabis businesses.

### [Cannabis Law Report](#)

A specialized online publication dedicated to news and analysis of laws, regulations, and policies governing the global cannabis industry.

### [United Cannabis Business Association \(UCBA\)](#)

A California-based trade association that provides advocacy, regulatory training, and networking services for licensed cannabis businesses.

## *Special Acknowledgments*

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