



2024 Gubernatorial Cannabis Voter Guide

MPP's Election Guide to 2024 Governors' Races and Cannabis Policy Reform

In 11 states, voters will be choosing their next governor on Election Day — Tuesday, November 5. In many races, there is a stark contrast between the candidates. Governors have a tremendous impact on cannabis policies in their states, from signing or vetoing bills to overseeing agencies that can implement, expand, or obstruct existing cannabis laws.

Our voter guides aim to provide transparency on where candidates stand regarding cannabis policy issues. To help inform voters, we provide insight into candidates' views on legalizing cannabis, expanding medical cannabis programs, regulating cannabis businesses, and addressing social equity and criminal justice issues tied to cannabis legislation. Our voting guides are based on incumbent lawmakers' records, public comments, and responses to questions we emailed.

Delaware

Matt Meyer (D) — **A** — Meyer, who serves as county executive for Newcastle County, is an [advocate for the legalization of marijuana](#). He wrote an opinion piece in 2022 criticizing Governor John Carney's veto of the 2022 bill to legalize marijuana and encouraging the state legislature to override Carney's veto. (Gov. Carney allowed legalization to become law without his signature in 2023, but remains opposed.)

Mike Ramone (R) — **C** — State Rep. Mike Ramone has a mixed record on legalization votes. Ramone voted for legalization bill HB 371 in 2022, but then voted *against* overriding Gov. Carney's veto of it. In 2023, he voted for HB 1 — which allowed possession of small amounts of cannabis — but against HB 2 — to allow regulated sales.

Background: Delaware has enacted medical cannabis, decriminalization, and adult-use legalization. It lacks some non-discrimination protections other legalization states have — to prevent people from losing their jobs, child custody, benefits and medical care for responsible cannabis use. It also continues to impose possible jail time and criminal penalties for public smoking.

Indiana

Jennifer McCormick (D) — **A** — [McCormick's website says](#) "We will support the development of a legal, well-regulated cannabis market. Legalizing medical marijuana would be the first step and carries the benefit of providing doctors one more option for treating suffering patients." She shared MPP's DEA rescheduling graphic on [her campaign Facebook page](#) in May. She added, "It's time we listen to the majority of Hoosiers and develop a legal, well-regulated cannabis market. As governor, I will pursue this. Legalizing medical marijuana would be the first step and carries the benefit of providing doctors one more tool in treating suffering patients." McCormick, who served as Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction, [changed from Republican to Democrat](#) in 2021.

Mike Braun (R) — **C** — Braun says he is open to medical marijuana becoming legal. [He stated](#), “I believe when it comes to medical marijuana, there are too many good reasons why you need to start making that legal for that purpose.” He has not directly answered questions on his stances on legalization or decriminalization, and his campaign did not reply to MPP’s questions on the issues. WFYI [reported](#) Braun expects some form of legalization in every state within the next decade. It quoted him saying, “My key thing would be to get with law enforcement to see what they think, because they’re the ones that are gonna have to spend the time, put their lives on the line.” (Of note, many law enforcement organizations have vigorously opposed cannabis policy reforms.) As a U.S. Senator, Braun has not sponsored bills to end federal prohibition.

Background: Indiana does not have a medical cannabis, decriminalization, or adult-use legalization law.

Missouri

Crystal Quade (D)— **A** — As the Democratic leader in the Missouri House, Quade has been a vocal supporter of cannabis legalization. She championed Amendment 3, which legalized adult-use cannabis in Missouri. Although she supported the amendment, [Quade expressed concerns about its expungement provisions](#) and the state’s continued limitation on business licenses, which she felt could lead to corruption. Despite these issues, Quade viewed the amendment as a crucial first step towards more comprehensive reform and remains committed to improving cannabis policies in Missouri.

Mike Kehoe (R) — **C** — Kehoe is a former state senator who has served as lieutenant governor since June 2018. He does not appear to have taken any public position on legalization, which voters passed in 2022. He has been [supportive of regulations for hemp](#), particularly in response to Governor Parson’s executive order attempting to ban intoxicating hemp products. The hemp industry supported him in the 2024 primary election.

Background: Missouri has enacted medical cannabis, decriminalization, and adult-use legalization.

Montana

Ryan Busse (D) — We have limited information on Busse’s stances on cannabis policies. A former firearms executive and [campaign adviser](#) for President Joe Biden, Busse [criticized](#) current Governor Greg Gianforte’s veto of Senate Bill 442, which proposed reallocating marijuana tax funds for infrastructure and other state needs.

Gov. Greg Gianforte (R) — **C** — [While serving in the U.S. House of Representatives](#), Gianforte opposed the SAFE Banking Act in 2019 and abstained from voting on the MORE Act in 2020. However, as governor, he has not obstructed the implementation of the voter-enacted legalization law. Gianforte signed an implementation bill into law. During a 2020 Congressional subcommittee hearing, “Cannabis Policies for the New Decade,” U.S. Rep. Gianforte [said](#), “To consider making any Schedule I drug legal and more readily available without adequate research is a misplaced priority as addiction continues to ravage our country.”

Background: Montana voters legalized adult-use cannabis in 2020, after having approved medical cannabis in 2004.

New Hampshire

Joyce Craig (D) — A — Former Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig's [website](#) explains she supports legalization in a way that protects medical cannabis and encourages small businesses. She also supports creating a commission to review possible annulment and expungement of past charges, and is open to limited home cultivation as part of adult-use legalization.

Kelly Ayotte (R) — F — Former U.S. senator and state Attorney General Kelly Ayotte opposes legalization. She even worked to defeat medical cannabis and decriminalization. When WMUR asked Ayotte in 2024 if she would entertain legalization if she is elected governor, or if she is a firm “no,” she [said](#), “I don’t think legalizing marijuana is the right direction for our state. I don’t support legalizing marijuana in this state.”

Background: New Hampshire has a medical cannabis and a decriminalization law. It is the only state in New England that has not enacted adult-use legalization. You can review [MPP’s full voter guide for New Hampshire here](#).

North Carolina

Josh Stein (D) — A — The current attorney general for North Carolina, Stein has been vocal in his support for [decriminalization](#) and [medical cannabis](#). He thinks that S.3, the Senate- passed medical cannabis bill, is too restrictive. He chaired a state task force on criminal justice reform and [supports a health-focused policy towards legalization](#).

Mark Robinson (R) — D — The current lieutenant governor of North Carolina and a conservative pastor, Robinson has rarely addressed the cannabis issue. He has expressed “[he is conflicted on medical cannabis](#) but is open to a discussion.” He has not expressed any opinion on expanding North Carolina’s very weak decriminalization law implemented in the 1970’s. He is also [firmly opposed](#) to legalization.

Background: North Carolina does not have a medical cannabis or adult-use legalization law. It has a weak decriminalization law which potentially avoids jail time but creates a record.

North Dakota

Merrill Piepkorn (D) — C — During an October 10, 2024, gubernatorial debate, Piepkorn said he was conflicted about Measure 5 — which would legalize and regulate cannabis for adults 21 and older — but that he would vote “no.” ([C-SPAN debate](#) at 46:40) However, if voters passed Issue 5 and he were elected governor, Piepkorn said he would “implement it in the most effective and safe way.” As [NORML’s Smoke the Vote guide](#) shows, Piepkorn [voted “yes” on cannabis policy reforms bills](#) in recent years as a state senator. He is not known to have a public stance on cannabis legalization, and has not replied to MPP’s question about legalization.

Kelly Armstrong (R) — C- — During an October 10, 2024, gubernatorial debate, Armstrong said he has “flip flopped in my own mind on this issue [legalization] so many times.” (C-Span debate at 48:20) ([C-SPAN debate](#) at 48:20) He praised the drafters, including for giving local control, but said he would vote “no.” A current U.S. House representative, Armstrong voted “no” on the MORE Act, which would legalize cannabis with a focus on equity. He supported [SAFE Banking](#). During a primary debate this year, Armstrong [said](#) the state had made progress reducing penalties on cannabis offenses, and that if the legalization measure went further — which it does — he would vote against it.

Background: North Dakota has a medical cannabis law and a weak decriminalization law. It does not

have an adult-use legalization law, but one has been certified for the 2024 ballot.

Utah

Brian King (D) — **B** — King is a current Utah House representative who has supported expanding Utah's medical cannabis program. He said, "[There are more legitimate uses for medical marijuana than we have seen the legislature acknowledge, and accommodate for in the past and there are people suffering who could use it.](#)" King's campaign responded to an inquiry from MPP to say he also got back to our cannabis policy questions and stated that he "does support changing the penalty for possession of a modest amount of cannabis from possible jail time to a modest civil fine or community service." Regarding legalization, he wanted to see more information from states that have legalized before taking a position.

Gov. Spencer Cox (R) — **C-** — Governor Cox has supported improvements to Utah's medical cannabis law, including the expansion of qualifying conditions. Gov. Cox [signed a bill into law expanding legal protections for registered medical cannabis patients who are government employees](#). He has not called for decriminalization, nor has his campaign responded to MPP's questions on his stance on decriminalization and legalization.

Background: Utah has a medical cannabis law. It does not have a decriminalization law or a legalization law.

Vermont

Gov. Phil Scott (R) — **B** — The current governor of Vermont, Scott signed a bill to legalize cannabis possession in 2018, but he was very reluctant to allow adult-use sales. His wariness delayed full legalization. Ultimately, Scott allowed legalization of sales to become law without his signature in 2020.

Esther Charlestin (D) — **unknown** — A former Middlebury administrator, Charlestin's [campaign](#) has primarily focused on issues such as affordable housing, climate change, and education. ([Manchester Journal, 2024](#)). We are unaware of her stance on cannabis policies.

Background: Vermont has enacted medical cannabis, decriminalization, and adult-use legalization. It lacks some non-discrimination protections other legalization and medical cannabis states have — to prevent people from losing their jobs, child custody, benefits and medical care for responsible cannabis use.

Washington State

Bob Ferguson (D) — **B** — Washington's Attorney General, Bob Ferguson, advocates for drug decriminalization as a move away from the [punitive "war on drugs" approach](#), urging lawmakers to remove criminal penalties for non-commercial drug possession, including cannabis, and focus on recovery and treatment services. Ferguson has also emphasized the need for more resources to combat organized retail crime, which often targets cannabis businesses. His Organized Retail Crime Task Force addresses these challenges, and he plans to expand protections by creating an investigative unit within the State Patrol to tackle these crimes, according to his [website \[see Ferguson Plan\]](#). In March 2024, Ferguson [signed onto](#) a letter with other state attorneys general to call on the federal government to essentially re-criminalize certain hemp derived cannabinoids.

Dave Reichert (R) — F —A former U.S. Congressman and sheriff, Reichert has previously taken a critical stance on cannabis legalization. In 2018, Reichert expressed concerns about the potential negative effects of marijuana use on youth and supported federal enforcement actions against states with legal cannabis markets. He advocated for the rescinding of federal guidance, [such as the Cole Memo](#), which had protected state-level cannabis legalization from federal interference. Rep. Reichert [voted against](#) every cannabis policy reform that NORML tracked on its Smoke the Vote guide.

Background: Washington has enacted medical cannabis and adult-use legalization. Unlike most adult-use legalization states, it does not allow adults to cultivate their own cannabis and it continues to impose possible jail time on those under 21 who possess cannabis.

West Virginia

Steve Williams (D) — A- — Williams, the mayor of Huntington, West Virginia, recently [expressed support](#) for cannabis legalization and having the legislature [refer the question to voters](#). His campaign site includes a [petition](#) to West Virginia legislators that says:

It's time for West Virginia to move forward on cannabis legalization. States like Maryland, Ohio, and Virginia are already benefiting from increased tax revenue, job creation, and expanded freedoms for their citizens. Legalizing cannabis for adult use in West Virginia will boost our economy, fund critical public services like education and healthcare, and reduce unnecessary arrests for non-violent offenses.

... By legalizing and regulating cannabis, we can create safer communities and give West Virginians the freedom to make their own choices.