



## MPP's Election Guide to 2022 Governors' Races and Cannabis Policy Reform

In 36 states, voters will be choosing their next governor on Election Day — Tuesday, November 8. In many races, there is a stark contrast between the candidates. Governors have a tremendous impact on cannabis policies in their states, including signing or vetoing bills, pardoning past convictions, and overseeing agencies that can implement, expand, or obstruct existing cannabis laws.

Here's MPP's round-up of where major party gubernatorial candidates stand on cannabis policy reforms. For each state, the more supportive major party candidate is listed first.

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### Alabama

**Yolanda Flowers** (D) — Supports medical cannabis legalization [saying](#), "I just hope that we keep it as natural and pure as possible without mixing a lot of chemicals into it. God gave the herbs for our use."

**Gov. Kay Ivey** (R) — [Signed](#) a restrictive medical cannabis bill into law in 2021. When she was asked about medical cannabis legislation in 2019 she [said](#), "I'm still trying to get the details, but if it's tightly controlled and limited to just those illnesses as verified by medical professionals, it'd be worth considering." Gov. Ivey has no known position on decriminalization or legalization. Regarding Pres. Biden's call on governors to issue mass pardons for prior cannabis possession convictions, her spokesperson [said](#) the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles issues pardons on a case-by-case basis and "Even if the board could grant an across-the-board pardon, it would only impact a very small fraction, less than one percent of those currently serving sentences in our state."

*Background: Alabama has a comprehensive medical cannabis law, though sales have not yet begun. It has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis.*

### Alaska

**Les Gara** (D) — As a state representative, Gara [voted in favor](#) of a cannabis record-sealing bill (HB 316, 2018). [He also hosted a cannabis industry roundtable](#) on September 6, 2022, and said listening to the industry would be important.

**Gov. Mike Dunleavy** (R) — Early in his term, [made appointments](#) to the Marijuana Control Board that concerned advocates. However, he subsequently [brought back](#) a prior board member who is an advocate. Gov. Dunleavy [tweeted](#) in support of the Alaska House-passed bill to expunge prior convictions, but it died in the Senate. [He also recently established](#) a Task Force on Recreational Marijuana to review taxes, fees, and regulations, and provide recommendations for improvements.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Alaska pursuant to a voter-enacted 2014 law. Alaska also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Arizona

**Katie Hobbs** (D) — As a state senator, Hobbs co-sponsored bills to reduce medical cannabis application fees for veterans (SB 1300, 2018) and to allow medical cannabis research at universities (SB 1443, 2013).

**Kari Lake** (R) — As a TV news anchor in 2018, [Lake was taken off air for a week](#) after [falsely claiming](#) a movement to increase public school funding and teachers' pay was secretly a push for legalization. Her [tweets](#) suggested she opposed legalization, "They [sic] raise is highly deserve [sic]. But surely there are ways to pay for it other than legalizing pot."

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Arizona pursuant to a voter-enacted 2020 law. Arizona also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Arkansas

**Chris Jones** (D) — Supports equitable legalization. His [website](#) says, "Chris Jones favors the legalization of recreational cannabis, which would generate tax revenue for educational programs and expunge nonviolent felony and misdemeanor cannabis convictions."

**Sarah Huckabee Sanders** (R) — [Said](#) she intends to vote against the 2022 legalization ballot measure.

*Background: Arkansas has a voter-enacted medical cannabis law. Arkansas does not have a decriminalization law. Adult-use legalization will be on the ballot in November as Issue 4.*

## California

**Gov. Gavin Newsom** (D) — Has been a strong and vocal supporter of legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults' use. He led a blue ribbon commission on the issue prior to Prop. 64 passing. Signed [several favorable bills into law](#), including [preventing workers from being fired for off-hours cannabis use](#) and speeding up record sealing.

**Brian Dahle** (R) — Voted [against several cannabis policy reforms](#), including bills to [prevent workers from being fired for off-hours cannabis use](#) and speeding up record sealing. In 2015 he [said](#), "there are many problems" with legalizing cannabis.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in California pursuant to a voter-enacted 2016 law. California also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Colorado

**Gov. Jared Polis** (D) — In Congress, he started the Congressional Cannabis Caucus and supported federal reform. In [2020](#) and [2021](#), Gov. Polis issued mass pardons for individuals with thousands of cannabis possession convictions. He signed several bills to improve cannabis policies, including to [increase possession limits, to allow home delivery, and to allow cannabis lounges/on-site consumption](#). He also [signed](#) a 2021 bill to address concerns about 18 to 20-year olds accessing cannabis — particularly concentrates - medical program.

**Heidi Ganahl** (R) — In a December 2020 guest column in the *Colorado Springs Gazette* [said](#),

"Colorado's experiment with commercialized weed isn't helping our kids."

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in California pursuant to a voter-enacted 2012 law. Colorado also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Connecticut

**Gov. Ned Lamont** (D) — [Championed and signed into law](#) a bill legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults' use in 2021, and expunging convictions.

**Bob Stefanowski** (R) — In the 2018 race, [made it clear](#) legalization was not a priority, saying, "Maybe at some point we should look at legalizing cannabis ... but we've got so many fundamental problems in this state ... Let's fix the economy first." [Requested an AG investigation](#) into Gov. Lamont after Lamont tweeted a link to a song listing numerous good things about Connecticut, including that it's "cool to smoke some pot" now that legalization passed.

*Background: Cannabis is legal for adult use in Connecticut, though sales have not yet begun. Connecticut also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Florida

**Charlie Christ** (D) — Supports legalization. [Said](#), "As governor, I will push for the full legalization of marijuana and the expungement of all existing charges and sentences for nonviolent offenses. It's time to right the policies that have failed our fellow Floridians, too many of whom are our black and brown neighbors."

**Gov. Ron DeSantis** (R) — Did not directly answer when recently asked about legalization, but suggested he is opposed, [saying](#), "What I don't like about it is if you go to some of these places that have done it, the stench when you're out there, I mean, it smells so putrid." In August 2022, his administration [dramatically reduced](#) the amount of medical cannabis patients can obtain — without even allowing an opportunity for public comment. [Has not responded](#) to [calls](#) for him to issue mass pardons for cannabis.

*Background: Florida has a voter-enacted medical cannabis law. It has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis.*

## Georgia

**Stacey Abrams** (D) — [Supports](#) medical cannabis, decriminalization, and [record expungement](#). Open to legalization "once we have a strong substance abuse network."

**Gov. Brian Kemp** (R) — Signed a bill allowing in-state production of low-THC cannabis. His 2018 campaign website [said](#) he is not "in the camp of being pro-recreational cannabis." Has not voiced support for decriminalization.

*Background: Georgia does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis. However, Georgia has a law allowing patients with certain medical conditions to possess cannabis with no more than 5% THC. [In Georgia](#), the governor does not have clemency or pardon power.*

## Hawaii

**Lt. Gov. Joshua Green** (D) — In response to [MPP's candidate survey](#), said, "I support legalization, provided that the tax revenue generated from cannabis sales be used to help treat drug addiction and individuals suffering with behavioral or mental illness."

**James "Duke" Aiona** (R) — [Opposes legalization](#) and blanket pardons for low-level cannabis possession [saying](#), "It is my position that as Governor, any application by a person seeking a pardon of a criminal conviction will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and not via a 'blanket' decision based on a particular offense. Pardons of criminal offenses cannot be based on a political promise."

*Background: Hawaii has a medical cannabis law and a very limited decriminalization law. It has not legalized cannabis for adults' use.*

## Idaho

**Stephen Heidt** (D) — Supports decriminalization. His [website](#) says, "We should decriminalize cannabis, and the penalty for its improper use should be level equivalent to that of a traffic violation."

**Gov. Brad Little** (R) — [Opposes not only medical cannabis, but apparently even legislation to allow low-THC, high-CBD cannabis](#). He [signed](#) laws making ballot measures more difficult to qualify, which will stymie efforts for voters to directly change cannabis laws. Issued a [statement](#) blasting Pres. Biden for his plan to issue pardons for federal offenses for simple possession of cannabis.

*Background: Idaho does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis. It is the only state without even a symbolic low-THC medical cannabis law.*

## Illinois

**Gov. J.B. Pritzker** (D) — Strongly supports legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults' use. [Championed and signed legalization](#) into law in 2019. More than 500,000 cannabis offenses were expunged or pardoned [as of late 2020](#).

**Darren Bailey** (R) — Opposed to legalization. As a state representative, voted "no" on legalization and [criticized](#) Gov. Pritzker for signing it into law.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Illinois. Illinois also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Iowa

**Deidre DeJear** (D) — [Supports](#) allowing medical cannabis and [legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults' use](#). [Tweeted](#), "Challenge accepted, Mr. President. As Governor, I will pardon simple state marijuana possession offenses and legalize cannabis in Iowa. (Because we all know Kim Reynolds won't.)"

**Gov. Kim Reynolds** (R) — In 2019, [Gov. Reynolds vetoed a bill](#) to expand the state's low-THC medical cannabis law. In 2020, she signed a bill that made changes to the state's medical cannabidiol program, including expanding the list of medical conditions that qualify and revising the amount of

THC that can be possessed. In 2018, she said she [opposed](#) legalizing cannabis for adults' use. Reynolds' office [did not respond](#) to multiple queries from Iowa's News Now about whether she would heed Pres. Biden's call for governors to pardon prior cannabis possession convictions.

*Background: Iowa does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis, decriminalization, or adult-use legalization law. It does have a low-THC medical cannabis law with limited in-state access.*

## Kansas

**Laura Kelly** (D) — In an [interview](#) stated, "I want to push [medical cannabis] next term and make sure we get there." On legalization [she stated in 2020](#) that "I don't have a personal ideology regarding it. If the folks want it and the legislature passes it, would I sign it? Probably." Regarding Pres. Biden's call for mass pardons for simple possession, her office [said](#) she will "continue to consider all clemency and pardon requests based on a complete and thorough review of the individual cases."

**Derek Schmidt** (R) — [Opposes](#) legalization. Has opposed medical cannabis but [now says](#) he's open to a restrictive program. As Kansas Attorney General in 2021, his office [testified](#) against a medical cannabis bill. In June 2021, [he stated](#) "I already see plenty of destruction from addiction in our society. I don't think adding to that by saying recreational use of marijuana is okay, but I do think there is a place for legitimate medical uses of the cannabis plant."

*Background: Kansas does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis. Kansas law [does not appear](#) to allow for mass pardons.*

## Maine

**Gov. Janet Mills** (D) — [Signed legislation to implement](#) the stalled voter initiative to legalize cannabis. [Allowed other bills to become law without her signature](#), including to allow home delivery, to allow medical cannabis telehealth, and to repeal bans on individuals from past convictions to work in the cannabis industry. [Gov. Mills does not appear inclined](#) to issue blanket pardons for prior cannabis convictions.

**Paul LePage** (R) — [Opposed legalization](#). As governor, thwarted the will of voters by failing to implement the 2016 voter-approved legalization law. LePage [vetoed](#) implementation [bills](#). Legal and regulated sales were not able to be implemented until after he left office in early 2019.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in California pursuant to a voter-enacted 2016 law. Maine also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Maryland

**Wes Moore** (D) — [Supports legalization](#). His campaign site [says](#), "Wes will legalize cannabis, expunge the records of anyone convicted of simple possession, and prioritize equitable access to this emerging industry."

**Dan Cox** (R) — Has opposed legalization. As a state delegate, Cox voted [against](#) the bill to refer legalization to voters. Cox also voted [against](#) the companion bill that — if legalization is enacted by voters — would allow limited home cultivation, expungement, and set the stage for equitable legalization and regulation of sales.

*Background: Maryland has a medical cannabis and a decriminalization law. A legislatively referred measure to legalize cannabis possession for adults 21 and older will be on the November ballot as Question 4.*

## Massachusetts

**Maura Healey** (D) — [Strongly opposed](#) legalization initiative in 2016 as attorney general, including [co-authoring an op-ed against it](#). Now [says](#), “I hope that my concerns about the adverse impact on young people don’t come true. ... My concern may have been, fortunately, unnecessary.” She now says the focus needs to be on equity in the industry. Healy [said](#) if she becomes governor she would “move to pardon state convictions for simple marijuana possession, modeled after the steps taken today by President Biden.”

**Geoff Diehl** (R) — Listed on the [campaign website](#) as an opponent of Massachusetts’ 2016 legalization initiative. However, he [voted against](#) raising the tax above what voters enacted saying he didn’t want to go against the will of voters. In 2022, MassLive [reported](#) his “campaign said that he respects the will of the voters in legalizing marijuana in 2016 but feels that law enforcement needs a mechanism to deal with impaired driving.” Diehl opposed Biden’s blanket pardon for simple possession, saying it was “the latest in a series of outrageous moves by President Biden to eliminate consequences for wrongful actions as he panders for votes for his party in the midterm election.”

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Massachusetts pursuant to a voter-enacted 2016 law. Massachusetts also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Michigan

**Gov. Gretchen Whitmer** (D) — [Supported](#) legalizing and regulating cannabis when it was on Michigan’s 2018 ballot. Her administration has implemented the law. Her [reaction](#) to Pres. Biden’s call for blanket pardons focused on her background as a prosecutor and that she signed a Clean Slate bill to allow streamlined expungement and some automatic expungement

**Tudor Dixon** (R) — [Told reporters](#) she voted “no” on Michigan’s 2018 legalization ballot initiative. When asked about Pres. Biden’s pardons of individuals with federal cannabis possession convictions, Dixon offered no opinion saying she was not familiar enough with the action. Her campaign has not responded to follow-up questions on if she would support state-level cannabis possession pardons.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Michigan pursuant to a voter-enacted 2018 law. Michigan also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Minnesota

**Gov. Tim Walz** (D) — [Supports](#) legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults’ use. Has [called on lawmakers](#) to pass legalization. Reacting to Pres. Biden’s federal cannabis pardons and calls for state action, Walz’s office [said](#), “The Governor supports the President’s decision and has advanced marijuana legalization in Minnesota. Because pardons in Minnesota require a unanimous vote by the Board of Pardons, the Governor does not have the ability to take unilateral action.”

**Dr. Scott Jensen** (R) — As a state senator, Jensen co-authored a legalization bill in 2019. However, he [said](#) he would *not* vote for it and he just wanted a “robust discussion.” In September 2022, Dr.



Jensen said the legislature should decriminalize “trivial amounts” (Minnesota already has a decriminalization law) and expunge prior records. He [said](#) it “makes a lot of sense” to have the legislature refer legalization to voters. (The Minnesota governor has no role in the legislative-referral process, unlike bills.)

*Background: Minnesota has a medical cannabis law and a decriminalization law. It has not legalized and regulated cannabis for adult use. State law does not allow mass pardons.*

## Nebraska

**Carol Blood** (D) — As a state senator, voted in favor of medical cannabis bill in 2021 [saying](#), “An estimated 65 percent of veterans suffer from chronic pain and are twice as likely to die from an accidental overdose caused by prescription [opioids], more so than non-veterans. Our veterans are looking for alternatives. In fact, the VA has made it clear that veterans who use cannabis are not in danger of losing VA benefits — and that’s because it’s safe.”

**Jim Pillen** (R) — [Opposes](#) legalizing adult-use cannabis. No known public stance on medical cannabis.

*Background: Nebraska does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not legalized cannabis. It has a decriminalization law.*

## Nevada

**Gov. Steve Sisolak** (D) — Supports legalization. [Signed bills](#) into law to improve cannabis policies, including to allow cannabis lounges (AB 341, 2021) and to reduce penalties for minors’ first-offense possession to community service instead of possible jail time (AB 158, 2021). [Tweeted](#) on April 20, 2022, “No better day than 4/20 to recognize marijuana’s contributions to Nevada’s economy. Cannabis isn’t only a tourism boon—it’s a revenue creator, a way to diversify our economy, and a tool to invest in our essential services.” As the *Nevada Independent* [reported](#), “Under Sisolak’s watch, the Nevada Board of Pardons Commissioners formally forgave more than 15,000 misdemeanor marijuana possession convictions that occurred during the three decades before the state legalized recreational marijuana. Sisolak, who chairs the pardons board, proposed the idea in March 2020, and by June of that same year, the board unanimously approved a resolution pardoning the decriminalized offense.”

**Joe Lombardo** (R) — As Clark County Sheriff, [said](#) he supported consumption lounges, but only if they did not include alcohol sales. He also told attendees at the Las Vegas Medical Marijuana Association luncheon that the “adversarial relationship” between the cannabis industry and law enforcement had gone away.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Nevada pursuant to a voter-enacted 2016 law. Nevada also has a medical cannabis law.*

## New Hampshire

**Dr. Tom Sherman** (D) — As a state senator, voted for legalization of simple possession and home cultivation (HB 629, 2022). In 2020, [told](#) the Citizens Count Issue Survey he supported legalization for adult use, adding the comment, “Without the capacity for marketing.” As a state senator, he voted for medical cannabis in 2013.

**Gov. Chris Sununu** (R) — Has long [opposed](#) legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults' use, although his opposition weakened recently. In March 2022, [said](#) legalization in New Hampshire “could be inevitable” and that HB 1598 — which had a state-run monopoly on retail sales is “the right bill and the right structure.” [Signed](#) bill decriminalizing possession of up to three-quarters of an ounce of cannabis in 2017. [Vetoed](#) a 2019 bill to allow medical cannabis patients to cultivate a small number of plants.

*Background: New Hampshire has medical cannabis and decriminalization laws. It has not enacted adult-use legalization and regulation.*

## New Mexico

**Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham** (D) — Championed cannabis legalization when she ran for governor in 2020. [Signed legalization into law](#) on April 12, 2021, saying “We’re going to start righting past wrongs of this country’s failed war on drugs. And we’re going to break new ground in an industry that may well transform New Mexico’s economic future for the better.” Her administration swiftly implemented the law, with sales beginning less than a year later. In reaction to Pres. Biden’s cannabis pardon and call for state action, she [tweeted](#), “No New Mexican should suffer the consequences of outdated, out-of-touch, cannabis-related crimes. This year, New Mexico identified over 155,000 outdated cannabis charges that qualify to be expunged—helping people and families across the state. This is just one way New Mexico’s cannabis rollout was one of the best, and most just, in the country.”

**Mark Ronchetti** (R) — When asked by the [Albuquerque Journal](#) what changes he thought should be made to existing legalization laws, he said, “New Mexico should be the most aggressive state in the nation in keeping marijuana away from children and prosecuting drugged driving.” [He did not respond](#) to numerous requests for specifics on how he would try to change the Cannabis Regulation Act.

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in New Mexico. New Mexico also has a medical cannabis law.*

## New York

**Gov. Kathy Hochul** (D) — As lieutenant governor, before legalization passed she [said](#) it was “long overdue.” Her administration has implemented legalization with an emphasis on equity, [including](#) by having the first 100 retail licenses for individuals who were arrested (or whose close relatives were arrested) for cannabis.

**Lee Zeldin** (R) — As a U.S. Congressman, [voted](#) against federal legalization in 2020 (the MORE Act), and did not vote on it during the 2022 vote. In 2015 and 2019, voted against appropriations riders to prevent federal enforcement from targeting those complying with state legalization laws. Voted in favor of SAFE Banking in 2019. Was absent for SAFE votes in 2021.

*Background: Cannabis is legal for adult use in New York, though sales have not yet begun. New York also has a medical cannabis law, and an automatic expungement law that was signed in 2019.*

## Ohio

**Nan Whaley** (D) — [Supports legalization](#) with a focus on equity, noting, “The Black community has been the community that’s been attacked the most on this issue. It’s been disproportionately



enforced in Black communities rather than white communities and so when we do it, I think we need to make sure we have an equity lens in that work."

**Gov. Mike DeWine** (R) — Opposes legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults' use, [saying](#), "I think it's ridiculous to add an additional problem."

*Background: Medical cannabis is legal in Ohio and Ohio has a decades-old decriminalization law. Ohio does not have an adult-use legalization law.*

## Oklahoma

**Gov. Kevin Stitt** (R) — [Supportive](#) of the state's voter-enacted medical cannabis law at this point. [Prior to passage](#), indicated support for the concept of medical cannabis but indicated the measure was too broad. Thinks federal cannabis legalization would solve a lot of problems for the states. Opposes legalization in Oklahoma, [saying](#), "But in our state, just trying to protect our state right now, I don't think it would be good for Oklahoma."

**Joy Hofmeister** (D) — [Said](#) she is not yet certain about the legalization ballot measure, and that Oklahoma basically has recreational marijuana now and the tax revenue is very attractive. She also says it should be on the ballot, and that she will "respect the will of the people" and do this in a way "that is safe and gets control" of the "Wild West that we're in today."

*Background: Oklahoma has a medical cannabis law. It has not enacted adult-use legalization or decriminalization. Enough signatures were collected for legalization, but it will not be on the ballot until March 2023.*

## Oregon

**Tina Kotek** (D) — Served as speaker of the House during the implementation of legalization, including while the legislature passed laws that allowed early sales from existing medical cannabis dispensaries, allowing for a more rapid transition to legalization. Other cannabis policy reforms that made it through her chamber and became law include bills to improve cannabis banking (HB 4094, 2016), to ease veterans' access to medical cannabis (SB 1524, 2016), bills to allow interstate commerce once it's federally allowed (SB 582), and legislation to allow expungement of low-level cannabis convictions (SB 420, 2019). Voted in favor of allowing home delivery in jurisdictions where businesses aren't located (HB 2519, 2021). That bill also passed her chamber.

**Christine Drazan** (R) — As a state representative, voted against bills to allow home delivery of cannabis (HB 2519, 2021) and expungement of prior convictions (SB 420, 2019).

*Background: Cannabis is legal and regulated for adult use in Oregon pursuant to a voter-enacted 2014 law. Oregon also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Pennsylvania

**Josh Shapiro** (D) — [Supports](#) legalization and regulation [with expungement](#).

**Doug Mastriano** (R) — Opposes legalization, [calling](#) it a "stupid idea." He [claims](#) all legalization has done is "destroy ... society" in legalization states saying it's "turning [states like Colorado and California] into rat holes and third-world backwashes."

*Background: Pennsylvania has a medical cannabis law. It has not enacted adult-use legalization or decriminalization. While governors do not have unilateral pardon power in Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Wolf (D) rolled out an expedited cannabis pardon program in the fall of 2022.*

## Rhode Island

**Gov. Dan McKee** (D) — [Signed](#) adult-use legalization into law in May 2022, saying, “This bill successfully incorporates our priorities of making sure cannabis legalization is equitable, controlled, and safe. In addition, it creates a process for the automatic expungement of past cannabis convictions. My Administration’s original legalization plan also included such a provision and I am thrilled that the Assembly recognized the importance of this particular issue. The end result is a win for our state both socially and economically.”

**Ashley Kalus** (R) — [Supports legal cannabis sales](#).

*Background: Cannabis is legal for adult use in Rhode Island, though sales have not yet begun. Rhode Island also has a medical cannabis law.*

## South Carolina

**Joe Cunningham** (D) — On his [website](#), he has a section on his plan to legalize the medical and adult use of cannabis. He recently [said](#), “It’s time to legalize marijuana here in SC and expunge the records of people with low-level marijuana convictions.”

**Gov. Henry McMaster** (R) — In 2018, said he [opposes](#) allowing medical cannabis as long as law enforcement organizations in the state are opposed. (The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division is strongly opposed and has shown no signs of changing its stance.) His position appears to have softened. In February 2022, he [said](#) Senate bill sponsor “Tom Davis had made a lot of presentations in the Senate about the need that some people have for relief that they can't get any other way. So this is one that is going to depend on a lot of things, but it's premature to comment until we actually see the bill.”

*Background: South Carolina does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis, decriminalization, or adult-use legalization law. Last session a medical cannabis bill passed the Senate but failed in the House on a procedural rule. MPP has issued a [voter guide](#) on S.C. House candidates.*

## South Dakota

**Jamie Smith** (D) — His [website](#) says, of cannabis, “In South Dakota, the people rule. As Governor, I will always seek to carry out the will of the people. We must acknowledge and carry out that decision, which means legalizing recreational cannabis rather than wasting taxpayer dollars on lawsuits. Legalization will also create thousands of potential new jobs and increase our annual GDP by more than \$14 million.”

**Gov. Kristi Noem** (R) — [Opposed both medical cannabis and legalization initiatives](#). After voters approved legalization in 2020, [she ordered a lawsuit](#) that [overturned](#) the voter-enacted law. In the fall of 2022, she [claimed](#) she will implement the 2022 ballot initiative to legalize cannabis if it passes.

*Background: South Dakota has a medical cannabis law. Voters legalized cannabis in 2020, but it was overturned in court in a Gov. Noem-backed lawsuit. A legalization measure will be on the ballot again*

*this November — Initiated Measure 27.*

## Tennessee

**Dr. Jason Martin** (D) — His [website](#) states “Pass cannabis for recreational use. Period.” In a September 2022 [interview](#), he reiterated his support of medical and adult use of cannabis.

**Gov. Bill Lee** (R) — Currently opposed to medical cannabis, [saying](#) “For me, the data is not substantive enough to show that medical marijuana is the right approach right now. I would pursue other options first.” In 2019 [he stated](#), “I have said before and still believe that we should not decriminalize marijuana... I think that's not good for our state.” Gov. Lee recently [said](#) he is not considering cannabis pardons.

*Background: Tennessee does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis, decriminalization, or adult-use legalization law. It does have a law that provides legal protections for patients to possess cannabis oil under 0.9% THC with no in-state access.*

## Texas

**Beto O’Rourke** (D) — Longtime supporter of legalization. His [website](#) says, “When I’m governor, we will legalize marijuana and expunge the records of those arrested for marijuana possession and we’ll use the nearly \$1 billion in new state revenue and reduced criminal justice costs to invest in public schools and reduce property taxes.”

**Gov. Greg Abbott** (R) — [Signed](#) low-THC medical cannabis bill into law, along with modest [expansion](#). In a 2018 debate, he stated, “I’ve had discussions with veterans as well as parents of autistic children and others make it a very strong compelling case about legalization of medical marijuana.” In May 2022, [said](#) he does support reducing the penalty for simple possession to a Class C (fine-only) misdemeanor but does not support legalization.

*Background: Texas does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis.*

## Vermont

**Brenda Siegel** (D) — During a 2018 public forum when she was running in the Democratic primary for governor, [said](#) she favored cannabis legalization with taxation and regulation.

**Gov. Phil Scott** (R) — On January 22, 2018, Gov. Phil Scott became the first governor in the nation to sign a bill making cannabis legal for adults’ use. However, he previously vetoed a similar bill in the spring of 2017 and identified changes that would have to be made before he would be willing to sign a subsequent bill. On October 7, 2020, Gov. Scott [announced](#) he would allow a legal-sales bill (S. 54) to go into effect without his signature — noting the legislature made progress on his demands, including requiring localities to opt-in to retail sales.

*Background: Cannabis is legal for adult use in Vermont. Sales are expected to begin on October 1, 2022. Vermont also has a medical cannabis law.*

## Wisconsin

**Gov. Tony Evers** (D) — [Supports](#) adult-use legalization and regulation. Gov. Evers [put](#) decriminalization and medical cannabis in his first budget proposal. (The GOP-controlled legislature did not enact them.) Gov. Evers has issued at least 600 individual pardons, including many for cannabis offenses, but he has not issued blanket pardons and his office did not respond to a follow-up asking, “There’s no plan in place right now or being considered for the governor to blanketly pardon all ‘simple marijuana’ offenses?”

**Tim Michels** (R) — [Opposes](#) adult-use cannabis legalization and regulation, saying, “I do not support the legalization of marijuana. I think it's all a slippery slope. I really do.” No known statements on medical cannabis or decriminalization.

*Background: Wisconsin does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis.*

## Wyoming

**Theresa Livingston** (D) — Told a [2020 NORML candidate survey](#) she would support a “conservative medical cannabis law,” along with a law “decriminalizing the adult personal possession, use, and cultivation of cannabis.” Commented, “I would rather support the legalization of cannabis. Fewer people in jail - easier for those that need it medically to obtain. I think eventually it will be legalized in the USA, which will be easier for everyone.”

**Gov. Mark Gordon** (R) — [Opposes](#) adult-use legalization and said he’d have to review any medical cannabis bill to decide how he would act on it. During an August 2022 forum for Republican gubernatorial candidates, [said](#) he would consider medical cannabis legislation if it came before him, saying, “I think I would be willing to look at the research.” During a fall 2022 gubernatorial [debate](#), said he personally opposes decriminalizing marijuana and cannabis products but he “will certainly look at whatever legislation comes.”

*Background: Wyoming does not have a comprehensive medical cannabis law and it has not decriminalized or legalized cannabis.*