



3 States Approve Adult Use; New York Expands Medical

The last month has seen lawmakers in three more states legalize cannabis for adults age 21 and older. The new laws in New York, Virginia and New Mexico also have mechanisms for expunging certain cannabis-related convictions. The actions will expand medical access for patients whose conditions are not on the qualifying lists and remove barriers for those who are interested in trying it or have concerns about registering with the state.

In New York, the new law also removes some restrictions in the state's medical cannabis program. Patients will now have access to cannabis flower, keep double the amount of cannabis on hand, and in 6 months will be allowed to cultivate their own medicine. Adults in New York are now allowed to have up to 3 ounces of cannabis on their person and may consume cannabis anywhere tobacco can

be used. Adult-use sales are expected to begin sometime in 2022.

In Virginia, lawmakers set a July 1 date for legal possession and use of cannabis by adults. Virginians will be able to possess up to an ounce of cannabis and cultivate four cannabis plants. The original legislation would not have gone into effect for almost two years, but the state's governor, Ralph Northam, asked the legislature to amend the bills to move it up to this summer. Retail sales will still have to wait until January 1, 2024.

In New Mexico, the new laws allow anyone 21 or older to possess 2 ounces of cannabis and cultivate 6 plants as of June 29. Adult-use sales will not begin until sometime in 2022. An estimated 150,000 New Mexicans will have their criminal records expunged automatically.

The expansion of cannabis access by state lawmakers this past month comes on the heels of successful voter initiatives in 7 states in the November general election. Voters approved robust medical cannabis laws in Mississippi and South Dakota, as well as adult use measures in Arizona, Montana, New Jersey and South Dakota.

PFC Unveiling New Patient's Guide



At ASA's National Medical Cannabis Unity Conference, the PFC Business Certification and Training program will be releasing the new Patient's Guide to Contaminants, which highlights some of the major contaminants that may be found on cannabis and hemp products and identifies the laboratory testing needed to detect them. This guidance document will also identify current state testing requirements, lack of federal guidelines, and what can be done to help harmonize differing regulations.

PFC has also recently updated more training courses, including the National Cannabis Standards Training course for Cultivation Operators, Understanding Cannabis Law, and Maryland State Compliance Training.

After months of development and review, the new PFC Standard has been approved and released. The PFC Standard is used as the benchmark for the PFC Business Certification Program and is now available for regulators. Requests for copies or more information can be sent to heather@safeaccessnow.org.

ASA Unity 2021 Conference Agenda Released

"No Patient Left Behind," the ninth annual ASA National Medical Cannabis Unity Conference, will be online Thursday, April 29 and Friday, April 30, beginning at noon Eastern time. The first day focuses on patients' rights and scientific research, while the second day covers building momentum, expanding access, celebrating success, and the future.

ASA Founder and President Steph Sherer and Executive Director Debbie Churgai open the conference, followed by three sessions devoted to patients' rights. The first panel is Housing, Healthcare & Employment, followed by a session on Kids and Cannabis, then a panel on Regulating Affordable and Accessible Medicine.

The second half of Day 1 focuses on science and research, beginning with Laying the Groundwork for Clinical Medical Cannabis Research, a panel of clinicians discussing Engaging in Medical Professional Education, and a last session on Testing, Contamination & Health. After closing remarks, ASA members will have a chance to gather virtually in meeting rooms oriented to different patient identities or in a more general meeting room.

Friday begins with a look at The Patient's Guide to Contaminants with the director of

ASA's PFC Business Certification and Training Program and the American Herbal Products Association's chief science officer. That's followed by a discussion of Ending the Federal Conflict through new legislation and then a Global Update on International Rescheduling and Standards. The third panel considers COVID Protections & Expanding Access State by State, and the final group covers opportunities for Assembling Federal Policy Reform.

Both days conclude with a members-only medication hang out to socialize with other conference attendees and ASA members one-on-one and in small group conversations.

In addition to these expert panels, ASA's 2021 Unity Conference features three presentations: Biden-Harris Can Do It! A campaign update by Dustin McDonald, ASA's Interim Policy Director; Kids and Cannabis: How to have the conversation by Mskindness B. Ramirez, the CEO of Club Kindness; and USP Perspectives on Cannabis Quality, a briefing by Dr. Nandakumara D. Sarma, the director of Dietary Supplements and Herbal Medicines for the U.S. Pharmacopeia.

Registration and more information about Unity 2021 is at www.asaunity.org.



ASA Weighs in on Biden's Cannabis-related Firings

Following reports that the Biden administration terminated or suspended several White House staffers for disclosing past cannabis use, ASA Executive Director Debbie Churgai published an opinion piece in The Hill questioning the new administration's promised commitment to equity in hiring and policy reform. In it, she also notes troubling signs that the administration is backing away from support for federal legislation such as the MORE Act, which would harmonize federal policy with state cannabis programs and remove barriers to medical research.

Activist Profile: Nikki Lawley, Buffalo, New York

It was just a routine vaccination. As a pediatric nurse, Nikki Lawley had done more than she could count, including with kids like this one, who really didn't want the shot. But the child turned combative and suddenly headbutted her, snapping her head back against the wall. She didn't realize it immediately, but the double impact and whiplash would change her life. She'd just sustained a serious traumatic brain injury and now had cervical instability. Headaches, memory loss, insomnia, mood disturbance, anxiety and depression took control of her life.

Even though she was a medical professional, getting a diagnosis and appropriate care was a battle. She was no longer a nurse; she was a woman with invisible injuries facing off with a series of skeptical physicians. Because the injury occurred on the job, she was also caught between New York state's workers' compensation and her private insurance company. Her insurance wouldn't pay for anything to do with it, and workers' comp had many restrictions on what it would cover. She cycled through more than 50 different medications, many with side effects more serious than the symptoms of her injury. But workers' comp refused to pay for any alternative treatments, forcing Nikki to tap into her life savings.

Within three short months, Nikki was at her wits' end. The side effects of the medications were excruciating, the battles with medical professionals were exhausting and humiliat-

ing, and the loss of her sense of self and her ability to work left her with no purpose in life.

"I was suicidal," she says.

Her struggle was obvious to those who cared about her. In an attempt to lift her spirits, her husband booked the two of them a trip to a favorite place: Las Vegas.



She was in no real shape to travel, but couldn't say no to a loving gesture. Once they got to the hotel, she couldn't leave the room. After trying and failing to convince her to try doing something fun, her husband went for a walk, and Nikki found herself on the balcony, seven stories up,

frightened but making a plan to end it. As she looked down at the street below, a billboard truck rolled by that said "Get your Nevada medical marijuana card here today."

In nursing school, Nikki had learned nothing about the endocannabinoid system or cannabis, and like many medical professionals did not consider cannabis to be medicine. Having exhausted every pharmaceutical treatment possible and every alternative treatment she could find and afford, she was out of options. The billboard truck rolled by again. Nikki made a decision.

She got her Nevada card and went to a dispensary.

"The budtender was a young guy who was

really caring and took the time to talk to me about all the options – lozenges, tinctures, everything," Nikki says. "I tried them all, but only smoked indica-dominant flower helped."

Cannabis got Nikki off the ledge – figuratively and literally – but when she got back to New York from Las Vegas, she discovered she was not allowed access to the type of medicine that helped her.

"In 2017, New York did not allow smokeable cannabis and capped the amount of THC," Nikki recalls. "And chronic pain wasn't on the list of qualifying conditions."

The limits on New York's medical cannabis program forced Nikki to travel regularly from Buffalo, NY to stay with friends in Ontario, Canada, where she could get legal access to the types of cannabis medicine that alleviate her pain and TBI symptoms. The pandemic restrictions stopped her ability to travel, forcing her to consider moving to somewhere with less restrictive rules. Last week, New York finally made smokeable flower legal for patients in the state, thanks to the tireless efforts of activists such as Nikki who worked for years to educate lawmakers and the public.

"I am excited to see the medical program expansion include smokable whole plant medicine!" Nikki says. "The consumption piece means I won't live in fear about where I can consume my medicine, but the biggest win, I believe, is the way the law addresses social equity and justice!"

Nikki may have not planned on being an activist, but since she realized the need to come out of the shadows and tell her story, she's embraced the role wholeheartedly. She contributes regularly to several online support groups for others with head injuries as well as medical cannabis groups. She's an active member of ASA, and has been the subject of more than two dozen news articles, podcasts, and blogs, where she tells her story fearlessly so that others may draw strength and inspiration from it. Many of those stories and interviews can be found at <https://linktr.ee/Nikkilawley>.

Action Alert: Stop the Drug Testing of Federal Workers

Federal employees and contractors are currently prohibited from using cannabis, even for medical purposes, and are subject to random drug testing. Many are veterans or seniors who may benefit from or already use medical cannabis. Join ASA in urging the Biden administration to end this discriminatory practice. Take action now www.safeaccessnow.org/bidenopm

JOIN TODAY!

YES! Please accept my donation

(check one) ☐ Monthly ☐ One-time ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$35 ☐ Other Amount \$_____

Name _____ ☐ Check or Money Order Enclosed.

Address _____ ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ AmEx ☐ Discover

City, State, Zip _____ Card Number: _____

Phone _____ Signature: _____

Email _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV Security Code _____

Mail to: Americans for Safe Access, 1629 K Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20006

www.AmericansForSafeAccess.org

"Becoming an advocate for cannabis was never what I imagined," Nikki says. "But by telling my story I have more impact now than I had as a nurse."

ASA to Present at Free Canna World Expo event

Join ASA at the Cannaworldexpo one-year celebration event on Saturday 4/17. ASA's Executive Director, Debbie Churgai, will be presenting the US Update on Patient Access on Saturday 4/17 at 9:00 am PT/12 pm ET. To register for this free event, visit: cannaworld-expo.com/register.