



ASA's 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

WHO Recommended Rescheduling, ASA Urges Global Action

In an historic move last January, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended to the United Nations (UN) that cannabis be classified as a medicine. Based on the findings of its Expert Committee on Narcotic Drugs, the WHO said cannabis and cannabis resin can be removed from Schedule IV of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, an international treaty that has stymied efforts to make cannabis available to patients. The WHO recommendations were scheduled to go before the 53-member UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) last March, but the vote was postponed indefinitely. ASA staff attended the CND meeting in Vienna, Austria in December, held an evening reception for CND member states, and created an open letter to CND representatives urging rescheduling. As part of the International Medical Cannabis Patients Coalition, ASA also organized a training in Vienna on how to support rescheduling.

Historic Reform Passed House Committee

For the first time, a measure to remove federal restrictions on access to cannabis passed out of a House committee. In November, H.R. 3884, the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act (MORE Act) got a bipartisan vote of 24-10 in the House Judiciary Committee. The bill must pass a vote by the full House of Representatives to move to the Senate. The MORE act would deschedule cannabis, allow expungement of certain cannabis offenses, and impose a 5 percent tax that would be reinvested in communities adversely impacted by the War on Drugs.

First Federal Cannabis Bill Passed House

The first federal bill to reform cannabis laws was approved by the House. HR 1595, the Safe and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act, would allow cannabis businesses access to banks and other financial services. ASA supported the bill's passage with written testimony and a letter to the House. The SAFE Act could reduce costs for operating a medical cannabis business, which may result in lower prices for patients and increased access.

Vaping-Related Illness Identified, ASA Issued Patient-Focused Recommendations

U.S. health officials in November identified Vitamin E acetate as a probable culprit in the vaping-related lung injuries that have affected more than 2,000 people and resulted in more

than 50 deaths. The CDC announced that researchers found the chemical in the lung fluids in 29 people in 10 states. No other toxins were detected. In September, ASA had urged federal agencies to take immediate action to address the vaping illness crisis. ASA provided recommendations to the FDA, the CDC, and Health and Human Services for sensible regulation of vaporization products and cartridges. ASA also asked the FDA to advise consumers to only buy vaporization products in licensed stores and not on the illicit market.

ASA Testified at FDA Hearing on CBD

Passage of the federal 2018 Farm Bill removed hemp and hemp extracts from the Controlled Substances Act, creating the potential for a legal interstate market in hemp-derived CBD products. As a result, in May the U.S. Food and

State Lobbying and Law Changes

ASA Issued *State of the States* Report, Educated State Lawmakers

ASA released its annual report on state medical cannabis laws at the Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). The 2019 *State of the States Report: An Analysis of Medical Cannabis Access in the United States* grades each state, the District of Columbia and four territories on patient access. The report finds that access has improved significantly over the years, but state programs are still struggling to serve all patients. In addition to evaluating state medical cannabis program, the report includes responses from a survey of over 500 patients. This survey reveals that cost of medicine remains the single greatest challenge faced.

ASA distributed printed versions of the report among the thousands of state legislators and staff attending the NCSL Summit in August. Among the hundreds of key state lawmakers ASA spoke with were bill sponsors for medical cannabis legislation in Tennessee, Alabama and North Dakota, and the sponsor of cannabis as alternative to opioid bill in Colorado. The 2019 States Report can be seen at: <https://www.safeaccessnow.org/sos>.

California Lobbying Helped Improve Laws

May kicked off with the third-annual California state lobby day in Sacramento, sponsored by ASA and California NORML. State officials addressed the group about developing rules and legislation before attendees went to the capitol for pre-arranged

Drug Administration (FDA) held a public hearing on cannabis and cannabis-derived products such as CBD. The FDA asked questions about manufacturing and product safety, industry standards, and labeling, which ASA's Director of Patient Focused Certification (PFC), Heather Despres answered. ASA's testimony can be seen on ASA's YouTube channel.

Patient's Guide to CBD Released

In conjunction with the FDA hearing on cannabis, ASA released the Patient's Guide to CBD. The publication covers a wide range of topics, including available forms for use, what to look for on package labels, how to read a certificate of analysis, how CBD interacts with the endocannabinoid system, the current state of research, the compound's legal status, and how to talk to doctors about CBD.

meetings with lawmakers and their staffers about several pending bills, including ones to lower taxes, allow medical access in schools and healthcare facilities, and license on-site consumption. In September, ASA launched a campaign asking California ASA members to urge Governor Newsom to sign SB 34, a bill to allow businesses to donate free cannabis to patients in need. The lobbying effort helped get the bill signed into law, providing much needed help to the state's neediest patients.

Georgia Approved In-State Production of Low-THC Cannabis Oil

After dedicated work by advocates, Georgia enacted a law that would allow for the in-state cultivation and production of medical cannabis. Access will be limited to low-THC products, but HB 324 creates a Medical Cannabis Commission to determine licensing of businesses. The governor signed the law, but after six months had not appointed anyone to the commission. Currently, there is no legal means to obtain any medical cannabis product. The bill also creates testing standards and a distribution and production network, provides for university research and calls for equity in licensing.

Colorado Allowed Cannabis in Lieu of Opioids

Colorado joined Illinois and New York in allowing cannabis to be recommended by authorized healthcare providers for any condition for which an opioid would be appropriate. Colorado's SB-013 allows physicians to author-

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ASA Advocacy, Research and Education

End Pain, Not Lives Campaign Focused on Opioid Overdoses

In partnership with the U.S. Pain Foundation, ASA's End Pain, Not Lives (EPNL) campaign has worked to remove barriers to safe access for people with pain, chronic pain, and opioid use disorder. The campaign has been educating medical professionals, legislators, service providers, and patients about medical cannabis as a safer alternative for pain management.

In 2019, ASA distributed model language surrounding ways to combat the opioid epidemic to state officials all over the country. In 2019, New Jersey joined New York, Pennsylvania and other states in recognizing opioid addiction as a qualifying condition. Illinois also now allows patients to substitute medical cannabis for an opioid prescription before developing a dependence. The Opioid Alternative Pilot Program is unique in giving pain patients the option of medical cannabis without requiring a specific recommendation for it.

2019 Unity Conference Brought Advocates to DC

ASA's 7th Annual National Medical Cannabis Unity Conference and Lobby Day brought together over 300 physicians, scientists, patients, advocates and industry professionals to learn, network and make their voices heard on Capitol Hill. During the Lobby Day, over 150 meetings were set up on Capitol Hill with conference participants and their state representatives. Advocates lobbied for ASA's new federal legislation, the "Medical Cannabis Control Act of 2019" (MCCA), which would create a federal agency to provide oversight of medical cannabis. At the start of the conference, ASA held two free workshops, a veterans' round-

table discussion and a Cannabis 101 course. Conference panels addressed barriers to patients, global CBD developments including hemp, and advocacy in the courts. ASA's annual awards banquet recognized the accomplishments of advocates and recognized ASA's new Board of Directors.

ASA Coordinated with Research Institute, ASA Co-founder Named President

In January, ASA staff travelled to Prague, Czech Republic to join global experts for the Annual Global Network meeting of the International Cannabis and Cannabinoid Institute (ICCI). ICCI announced in March that ASA co-founder Steph Sherer will serve as the institute's president. Sherer will continue to provide vision and fundraising leadership as president of the ASA Board.

ASA Formed Patient Research Partnership

At the end of the year, ASA launched a new medical cannabis patient research program in partnership with Aurelius Data. Anyone who completes the survey (most finish in about 5 minutes) by January 31, 2020, will be entered into a drawing to win a \$500 gift card or a free VIP registration for ASA's Unity Conference. Participants' survey information will be anonymous. All survey data will be stored securely and confidentially in compliance with HIPAA privacy guidelines. To participate, go to <https://research.aureliusdata.com/asanews>

ASA's Certification and Training Programs Expanded in 2019

In January, the PFC program expanded certification services to include hemp and CBD businesses. During the year, the program updated Core Cannabis Training staff courses, added new state regulation courses and updated the

Maryland, Pennsylvania and DC courses. PFC and the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) renewed their partnership to conduct dual ISO/IEC 17025/PFC accreditation. In early 2019, PFC started the process for ISO 17065 accreditation through A2LA, which will be completed in 2020.

In July, ASA's Cannabis Care Certification (CCC) program updated their Continuing Medical Professional (CME) courses for medical professionals approved under the latest rules for dealing with controversial subjects in CME programs. The new CME course provides medical professionals with accredited educational content focused on medical cannabis and the endocannabinoid system. The content provides Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), and American Psychological Association (APA) credits.

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ize individuals to use medical cannabis instead of opioids. The bill also removes specific specialist physician requirements for patients who are minors and allows them to consume non-smokable forms of cannabis on school grounds. ASA provided testimony in support of this bill, and the provision is part of the recommendations ASA distributed to state lawmakers at the NCSL Summit.

New Mexico and DC Approved Pediatric Use in Schools

In April, New Mexico passed SB 204, which allows for the administration of medical cannabis in schools. This law would not have been possible without ASA's hardworking New Mexico chapter advocates. The District of Columbia recently followed suit with a similar rule change. ASA advocates continue to work on legislation to allow children in need to have access in schools in other states, including California and Pennsylvania.

ASA Released Medical Cannabis Patient's Guide for U.S. Travel

At summer's end, ASA released The Medical Cannabis Patient's Guide for U.S. Travel to help patients understand the laws on access to cannabis when they venture out of state. The guide also contains helpful tips for patients to bear in mind while traveling. Laws vary dramatically between the 47 states and four territories that currently have some form of medical cannabis law. Some offer reciprocity to registered patients from other jurisdictions or permit the use of cannabis for all adults. ASA's new guide helps patients who are unsure about their rights or how to access medical cannabis where they visit.

ACTION ALERT: Tell Congress to Pass the MORE Act!

To start 2020, ASA is calling on Congress to take action on comprehensive cannabis legislation. The MORE Act passed the House Judiciary committee, which if enacted would remove cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and benefit the medical cannabis community in several ways. Take action today to tell your Representative to support the MORE Act. www.safeaccessnow.org/more.

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