



## New Cannabis Bills Pending in Many States



After long being relegated to voter initiatives, cannabis legislation is taking center stage in state legislatures all across the country. State lawmakers are considering new bills related to medical cannabis as well as adult-use. Many of the proposals are bipartisan or are have been authored or sponsored by Republicans.

Bills to expand medical access programs are under consideration in Alabama, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee. Each of these states has extremely restrictive medical cannabis laws that are not functional.

Legislation that would allow legal use by anyone over the age of 21 has been approved or is under consideration in more than a dozen states, with several governors advancing proposals as part of their budgets. Since Colorado legalized cannabis and began collecting taxes on its sale in 2014, the state has collected more than \$1.5 billion in revenue.

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam was sent an adult-use legalization bill last month, and New Mexico lawmakers are reconciling differences in the adult-use bills that separately passed the state house and senate.

Other states debating bipartisan or Republican-led adult-use bills include Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

## 2021 Unity Agenda, Registration Opens

Americans for Safe Access has released the tentative agenda for the 2021 National Medical Cannabis Unity Conference on April 29 and 30. This year's Unity Conference theme is "No Patient Left Behind," focusing on the barriers that many patients still face today, even in legal medical cannabis states.

This conference will be fully available online, so internet access is all that's needed to attend. Two full days of online programming include



11 panels and discussions in four tracks, all of which will highlight the needs for greater access and protections for patients. Unity 2021 will close with a members-only "Virtual Medication Happy Hour" for conversation and sharing online.

## PFC Accreditation, Updates to Maryland Training

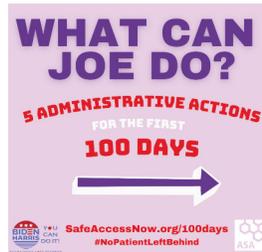
PFC continues to make forward progress on its ISO 17065 accreditation and is looking forward to making a formal announcement once completed. ISO 17065 is an international standard for product certification bodies.

PFC has updated the Maryland State Compliance training course along with the Business Operations course, which is being taught by guest speaker Elan Sudberg. Sudberg is the owner of Alkemist Laboratories and is a new member of the PFC Review Board. The Maryland State Training is available in the a la carte section of PFC's training website.

## ASA Campaign Update: First 100 Days

The Biden administration has a unique opportunity to establish safe access for all Americans with national reform of cannabis policies. From addressing challenges faced by patients in federally subsidized housing to veterans whose doctors are prohibited from recommending cannabis as a treatment option, the executive branch can accomplish meaningful change for patients without legislative action.

Yet President Biden's first 100 days plan included no action on cannabis reform. ASA is urging advocates to let his administration know patients need help now.



ASA's first 100 days campaign, Biden-Harris Can Do It: No Patient Left Behind! is identifying the many areas where executive action can make a difference in the lives of patients and their families. Each week, ASA is highlighting a different federal policy area for action at [www.safeaccessnow.org/100days\\_rollout\\_blog](http://www.safeaccessnow.org/100days_rollout_blog). Check back each week for more.

## USDA Finalizes Hemp Rules, Seeks More Info



Federal hemp regulations released in January were finalized last month. The new Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, signed the new rules, which take effect March 22. The regulations are the result of Congress legalizing hemp production as part of the 2018 Farm Bill.

The two-year delay in developing the rules was due in part to resistance by the Drug Enforcement Administration, which has claimed that hemp cultivation makes prosecuting marijuana cases more difficult.

During that time, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been approving hemp cultivation plans for various states and tribes. Those state and tribal regulations are part of the licensing process established by the 2018 Farm Bill.

Still pending is a decision by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on how to regulate

CBD, which can be extracted from hemp. The Farm Bill says hemp extracts below a THC threshold are legal for production and interstate commerce. As part of the change in administrations, the FDA withdrew its proposed CBD rules, which had been under review by the previous administration.



Questions about hemp sampling and testing remain.

The USDA is seeking more information on hemp production from thousands of farmers. A public comment period is underway on the proposed "Hemp Acreage and Production Survey."

USDA is already working with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture and the University of Kentucky on a national survey of hemp businesses about

# Activist Profile: Katree Saunders, Las Vegas, Nevada

For anyone who believes that passing adult-use laws fixes problems for patients, that medical cannabis use doesn't get anyone in trouble, or that being a patient can't cause problems for people, Katree Saunders is here to tell you different.

Katree discovered more than a decade ago that cannabis helped control her chronic pain from accident-related injuries, enabling her to get off the opioid painkillers she'd taken since she was 15. At first, like many patients, she was accessing cannabis on the underground market. But in 2008, she was sexually assaulted by a cannabis provider she had known for many years. "After that, I went into a spiral of depression," Katree says. "I didn't feel safe anymore."

Not long after, she happened across a listing for medical marijuana in a phone book and, after wondering if it was real, connected with a doctor who certified her for participation in the Nevada medical cannabis program. She got her card, but she still had no convenient means of legal access. At the time, being a registered patient was only a protection against going to jail for possession of cannabis. The only way to obtain medical cannabis it was to cultivate it yourself or find a caregiver.

"I wanted to help others because I knew what women faced on the streets," she says. "A lot of time women need flower but don't want to be put in the position I had experienced. I had to advocate for safe access."

Katree met Michael McAuliffe, who was facilitating a patient cooperative. When he opened Nevada Compassionate Care in early 2010 to provide consulting services for patients, Katree

was part of the team. Then, a few months later, President Obama came to town for a health care rally. Katree and a friend volunteered to help with the event and ended up seated in the front row right behind the President's podium. Friends had joked with Katree that if she got to meet President Obama she had to ask about medical marijuana.

"I thought, oh my God, I can ask him, I'm going to get to ask," Katree remembers. "So after his speech, I told him how much cannabis helped me with opiates. He said he wasn't prosecuting and shook my hand."

Katree was inspired and reassured. "This is awesome" she thought. But the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) wasn't done in Nevada. In December 2010, Katree was swept up in a large DEA operation in Las Vegas that targeted Nevada Compassionate Care and several other local businesses, resulting in 15 arrests. Katree had been approached by an undercover federal agent pretending to be a patient in need, who begged her for help. She got \$100 worth of cannabis for him.

At age 30, recently married and mother of a small baby, she was facing federal charges. Then, driving to one of the drug classes that were part of her pretrial release, their car got hit and Katree suffered another traumatic injury to her brain, back and neck.

"All the pills I had just gotten off, I had to restart because no cannabis use was allowed," Katree says. She was prescribed Marinol, the synthetic THC pills, and morphine, but the health insurance she had through her husband's employer only covered the opioids.



Katree with Dr. Ethan Russo at ASA's Lobby Day

With a husband working a new job in banking and a baby to care for, Katree elected to take a plea deal to avoid a trial and potential prison time. The terms of her four years of federal probation included drug testing for cannabis. Those tests cannot distinguish between cannabis and prescription Marinol, but that wasn't a problem--until she got a new probation officer.

"My new probation officer did not like the positive drug tests," she says. He contacted her doctor and got a court order to void the prescription. He used her positive tests and contact with two physicians about Marinol to violate her probation in 2014.

"I got four months in prison; I lost everything," Katree says. "I was a stay-at-home mom, but while I was in prison my husband got offered a promotion and raise to transfer to Ohio. He took the job, divorced me and took the kids."

Katree had to start over from scratch. She decided that she was going to get out, clear her name, and get a job in the cannabis industry that was starting to get off the ground in Nevada. In October 2016, she got a state license and went to work serving patients at dispensaries, cultivation and edible companies. At the time, only a Nevada state felony conviction barred people from being part of the cannabis industry. In 2019, after taking a few months off work to visit and spend time with her children, she returned to Nevada and tried to get a new card to work again.

In June, the Nevada Department of Taxation denied her renewal request, even though she had worked previously at five dispensaries. With the passage of an adult-use cannabis law had come new regulations. Now, any felony conviction bars you from working.

That hasn't stopped her. Katree is continuing the advocacy work she started after prison. She has been part of ASA campaigns for years and has traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress during ASA's annual Unity Conference. "My work with ASA has allowed me to use my voice to help incite change," Katree says. "It's been super impactful!"

## Action Alert: First 100 Days—Access for Veterans!

Veterans who rely on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as their primary health-care provider are unable to receive medical cannabis recommendations from their doctors, even if they live in a state with a medical cannabis program. All veterans should have access to the medicine they need through the VA. Urge the Veterans Administration to allow doctors to recommend cannabis to veterans! Take action now [www.safeaccessnow.org/bidenva](http://www.safeaccessnow.org/bidenva)

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