



## House Schedules Historic Vote on Cannabis Reform



The House of Representatives is taking historic action on cannabis measures. A House vote is scheduled for this month on the MORE Act (HR 3884/S 2227), legislation that would remove cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act altogether. In addition to removing federal legal restrictions on cannabis, the bill would impose a 5-percent tax on cannabis products that would fund cannabis job-training, expunging cannabis-related criminal records, and a national equity licensing program. The coming vote marks the

first time Congress has taken a floor vote on legislation legalizing cannabis. It is only the second piece of cannabis reform legislation to receive a House floor vote since the House approved the SAFE Banking Act (HR 1595) last September.

Americans for Safe Access is a supporter of the MORE Act, and is reaching out to congressional offices ahead of the vote to encourage members to cosponsor the bill and support the measure when it reaches the House floor dur-

ing the week of September 21.

"ASA encourages you to get engaged and reach out to your member of Congress and urge them to do the same. For more information on how you can get involved please visit ASA's MORE Act action page.

## ASA Urges Supreme Court to Hear Descheduling Case

Americans for Safe Access filed a "friend of the court" brief with the U.S. Supreme Court, urging them to hear a lawsuit challenging the federal scheduling of cannabis. ASA's amicus brief, which was filed with the pro bono support of attorneys in Goodwin's cannabis and appellate practice groups, highlights the plight of medical patients who face numerous restrictions in using medical cannabis.

The case was brought by five plaintiffs, including three who rely on treatment with cannabis to keep them alive: 14-year-old activist Alexis Bortell, Iraq War Veteran Jose Belen, and nine-year old Jagger Cotte. Bortell, Cotte and Belen, must carry their medical cannabis with them at all times, so they cannot legally travel by air or be on federal property. Bortell has also had problems with the schools she can attend. Her local schools will not permit her to use medical cannabis, so she has to travel 90 minutes a day to and from a high school that will. In middle school, she was barred from a class trip to Washington, DC because it would be illegal for her to have her medical cannabis on federal property. Bortell, Cotte and Belen all live in constant fear of losing their medication or even being arrested.

Michael Hiller, lead counsel for the plaintiffs whose law firm, Hiller, PC, is handling the case pro bono, is hopeful that the U.S. Supreme Court will take up the appeal, even though few such petitions are granted. "The confusing, unsettled nature of cannabis law has reached a breaking point, warranting resolution by the Court," said Hiller.

"The Supreme Court should allow these constitutional challenges to be addressed in the federal courts," said Brett Schuman, who leads the Cannabis Practice at Goodwin, the law firm that worked with ASA on the brief.

## ASA Releases Annual State Program Report

ASA has released the sixth annual report on state medical cannabis programs. The "2020 State of the States Report: An Analysis of Medical Cannabis Access in the United States" analyzes state programs from a patient perspective and grades them from A to F. The report breaks down what those programs are doing well, where they are failing, and how they can be improved to better serve the needs of patients.



Findings in the 2020 report show that the impact of COVID on medical cannabis was immense this year. However, it wasn't all bad news. Thanks in part to ASA's efforts, governors and medical cannabis directors in several states put in place temporary regulations that further protected patients while also guaranteeing no disruption to safe access to medical cannabis for patients. Curbside pickup, delivery, and telehealth were temporary regulations many states put in place to ensure continued access to medicine. These COVID solutions also addressed some pre-existing needs.

"Access to medical cannabis has come a long way, but this report shows us that while medical cannabis programs grow throughout the country, states are still failing to provide programs that fulfill the needs of all patients," said Debbie Churgai, ASA executive director. "That is why we do not just analyze the programs, but also provide state legislatures distinct methods to improve their medical cannabis programs."

Oregon and Oklahoma received top marks for their medical cannabis programs, receiving an

'A' and 'B' respectively. Meanwhile, the 14 states that limit access to CBD oil or low THC oil received 'F's. These highly restrictive systems are all failing to meet the needs of medical cannabis patients. Even states with robust programs have areas where they are failing to meet patient needs, including some states which have legalized cannabis for adult use

ASA's recommendations on how to end the federal conflict through an Office of Medical Cannabis federal oversight is included in the Model Federal Legislation report.

Join ASA Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. ET (4 PT) for a free webinar on the 2020 State of the States Report. ASA staff will provide background, cover the major conclusions and leave plenty of time for audience questions at the end. Visit [safeaccessnow.org/sos20\\_webinar](https://safeaccessnow.org/sos20_webinar) to RSVP.

## Register and Vote MMJ

To check your registration status, register to vote, or find out how to vote by mail or online in your state, please visit our Vote Medical Cannabis page. Make your voice heard by voting this election, because every vote is a medical cannabis vote! [safeaccessnow.org/vote](https://safeaccessnow.org/vote)

# Activist Profile: Marvin Washington, New Jersey



When Marvin Washington retired in 1999 after 11 seasons in the NFL with a Super Bowl ring on his finger, he wasn't thinking about cannabis. The financial industry was where he was headed. Fifteen years later, in 2014, he got approached by a cannabis business looking for a spokesperson. After hearing about the opportunities, he attended a conference to learn more about the industry. Once there, he says his "mind exploded," and he began a deep dive into the issues and immediately became an advocate.

"If my advocacy is a three-legged stool, then I was first an advocate for athletes, then as an entrepreneur invested in four companies, and I'm an advocate for the underserved and hurt."

In January 2015, Marvin and two other Super-Bowl-winning players authored an opinion piece in the Huffington Post urging the NFL to allow players to use cannabis to manage pain and brain injuries. Even though medical use was allowed in many states at that point, the NFL had a policy of suspending players for even legal medical use. Marvin and the other players asked the NFL to end that policy and to devote resources to studying the potential of CBD for treating head injuries. They also asked the NFL to take a leadership role in addressing the injustice of racial disparities in drug law enforcement.

Marvin is still concerned with how the NFL is handling the health and safety of athletes, but he's seen progress that suggests the same

Therapeutic Use Exemption that applies to other restricted medications may be available for players who want to use cannabis medicines instead of more dangerous pharmaceuticals. In recent years, Marvin has focused his attention on the social justice aspect of this issue.

"Enough athletes are speaking out about medical cannabis now," says Marvin. "As an African-American man, I need to bring the message to my community about the medical and economic benefits of this plant."



The history of the disproportionate impacts of cannabis prohibition on communities of color has left a legacy that extends into many areas, leaving stigma and limited opportunities. Educating cannabis businesses is part of his mission. Since he serves on the board of directors of six different cannabis companies, he has opportunities to be an agent for change.

"Diversity and inclusion is putting me on a board," Marvin says. "Once I'm on that board, I have to make sure that company creates social equity by ensuring those who have been affected most by prohibition can be successful."

Marvin's leadership role in advocating for change is no longer just on the athletic and business side. Now he's taking legal action, too. Marvin is the lead plaintiff in a group of patients suing the U.S. Attorney General to change the scheduling of cannabis, alleging a pattern of racial discrimination in the origin and enforcement of cannabis prohibition.

ASA has just filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of that lawsuit, urging the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case. Much has changed for patients and cannabis in America, but for Marvin, social justice and equality are still at stake, and trepidation is attached to the plant for the African American community.

Marvin says stigma still stalks cannabis, but he's not afraid. He welcomes the conversations that come from telling people he's in the cannabis industry, and 99% of them have been positive. Marvin believes in the power of the whole plant, and thinks it has a place in every medicine cabinet in the U.S.

"We're table setters for the people who will see this through," says Marvin. "The athlete who is going to take this to middle America is probably in junior high now."

## ASA Virtual Event on Neurological Conditions

Join ASA on Saturday, Sept 26th from 12pm to 6pm ET for the Medical Cannabis Symposium for Pediatric Neurological Conditions, presented by the Sonoma Chapter of ASA (Sonoma County ASA) and Americans For Safe Access National. This event will be free to everyone. ASA asks that those who are able to make a donation to support this important work do so. The presentations will feature physicians and researchers, parents and caregivers, industry and policy experts and pediatric patients themselves. Covered will be topics such as School Cannabis Policies, Cannabis and the Developing Brain and Transitioning into Adult Care. Register for this virtual symposium today at: [www.safeaccessnow.org/neuro20](http://www.safeaccessnow.org/neuro20).

## ASA Educates CDC about Cannabis and Chronic Pain

ASA's Interim Policy Director Dustin McDonald provided insights on using cannabis for pain management as part of a stakeholders' discussion with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC asked patients, caregivers and physicians to share their experiences with use of opioids for pain management versus alternative treatment options as part of their effort to update the Centers' internal guidance. ASA highlighted the utility of medical cannabis and shared with CDC staff information on medical cannabis treatment options, challenges faced by patients in securing access and ASA's educational resources.

### Action Alert: Urge Your Rep to Vote for the MORE Act!

The House is poised to vote on the MORE Act (HR 3884) in the week of September 21. ASA supports the MORE Act because it would remove cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act and benefit the medical cannabis community in several ways. ASA asks patients, caregivers, physicians and advocates to contact their members of Congress and urge them to cosponsor and vote for the measure. With the bill moving quickly it is important that your federal elected leaders hear from you as soon as possible. Take action today at [www.safeaccessnow.org/more](http://www.safeaccessnow.org/more).

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