

Cannabis Activist Group Supports Decriminalization Bill

Written by WI-CAN, Eric Marsch

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/marijuana-hemp-dairy-farmers-wi-s5.jpg>



WI-CAN hopes that both Democrats and Republicans can unite behind this compromise bill, gives reasons why.

MADISON - The Wisconsin Cannabis Activist Network (WI-CAN) supports Ortiz-Sortwell Marijuana Decriminalization Bill (LRB-3790), the recently introduced bill to decriminalize marijuana in Wisconsin.

While WI-CAN continues to advocate for full legalization of marijuana possession and sales in Wisconsin, this decriminalization bill is a huge step forward from where our marijuana laws are currently at.

This bill will:

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Remove criminal penalties for possession of up to 14g of marijuana across Wisconsin

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Create a statewide \$100-\$250 fine for possession of up to 14g of marijuana (most

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counties/municipalities that have decriminalized marijuana currently have fines over \$250)

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Allow counties/municipalities to further decriminalize up to 28g (1 ounce) of marijuana (currently counties/municipalities can only decriminalize up to 25g, three grams short of an ounce; an ounce is a very common amount purchased for personal consumption)

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Ensure no one will get a felony conviction for possessing an ounce or less of marijuana (currently, anyone with a previous marijuana conviction will be charged with a felony for possessing any amount of marijuana, even in decriminalized counties/municipalities)

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Encourage an end to drug testing at jobs that don't involve dangerous labor by offering liability protection to companies that don't test for off-hours cannabis use

We acknowledge that it is unfortunate that this bill would raise fines in some municipalities and counties to \$100, up from the \$1 penalties we fought so hard for. But if that's what it takes to build a bipartisan consensus that can pass the legislature, we believe that is an acceptable compromise. Ending the more than 4,000 criminal convictions for marijuana possession that occur every year in Wisconsin and ending felony convictions for possession of small amounts of marijuana - as is currently happening - must be a top priority.

In 2018, Milwaukee County only wrote 158 citations for marijuana possession. Other areas that have fines below \$100 also tend to have low arrest rates. The hundreds of people who will pay slightly higher fines under this bill is far fewer than the thousands who will no longer face criminal conviction and the employment, housing, and financial aid discrimination that comes along with criminal convictions.

For these reasons, we hope that both Democrats and Republicans can unite behind this compromise bill that comes far short of our ultimate goal of legalization, but does move us forward by preventing thousands of Wisconsinites from having their lives upended by criminal

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conviction.