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Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems

Marijuana Alert - December 5, 2022



Senate plots pro-pot move for lame-duck

A bipartisan group of senators plans to attach significant marijuana legislation to "must-pass" year-end bills, Axios has learned.

The big picture: The group, led by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), has the Justice Department's blessing for legislation letting cannabis companies access banking institutions, and creating grants for state expungement of past marijuana convictions.

- In an email reviewed by Axios, the Justice Department said it would be able to implement the revised legislation.
- Earlier this year, the Justice Department sent a memo to the Senate with concerns about the potential implementation of the bill, Punchbowl News first reported.

Catch up quick: The targeted legislation is the result of the pairing of two bills —Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act and the Harnessing Opportunities by Pursuing Expungement (HOPE) Act—that would attract both conservatives and progressives across Congress.

- The latest changes to the bill ensure that the legislation does not unintentionally make it harder for law enforcement to prosecute other crimes involving other drugs or money laundering.

Schumer and the bipartisan group plan to attach this legislation to a must-pass year-end bill like the annual National Defense Authorization Act.

- Schumer and Sen. Jeff Merkley have been working with

Republicans for months, including Sens. Steve Daines, Rand Paul, and Dan Sullivan.

Zoom in: The SAFE Banking Act, which allows cannabis businesses in states where it is legal to open bank accounts and get loans, has already passed the House six times.

- The HOPE Act would stand up a program for DOJ to make grants to states and local governments to expunge convictions.

Zoom out: Cannabis reform enjoys wide agreement among voters — but disagreement in Congress over whether to prioritize banking or comprehensive reform has so far led to a stalemate on the issue.

- The latest legislation does not legalize marijuana on a federal level.
- Cannabis remains a Schedule 1 drug, like heroin and LSD, under federal law, but at least 20 states and the District of Columbia have so far legalized marijuana for non-medical use.

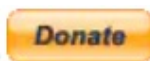
The bottom line: A more sweeping cannabis bill introduced by Schumer and other Democratic senators earlier this year that decriminalizes the drug on the federal level and allows states to set their own marijuana laws is still stalled.

- President Biden this week signed a landmark medical marijuana research bill after pardoning all prior federal offenses of simple marijuana possession shortly before the midterm elections. [READ](#)

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