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## **Drug reform advocates: Legalizing marijuana is just the first step**

*Oct. 1 early start bill passes in Oregon Senate; Oregon police to stop arresting people for some marijuana crimes*

The day before adult use of marijuana becomes legal in Oregon, leaders of the state's drug reform movement said they plan to expand their work to change how Oregon approaches drug policy.

"Thanks to Oregon voters, we have made history and become national leaders in drug reform," said Anthony Johnson, chief petitioner of the Yes on 91 campaign to legalize marijuana. "But there's still a lot to do, and this is just the beginning."

Johnson has been advocating for an earlier start to regulated sales for marijuana, and the Oregon Senate today passed [a bill](#), 23-6, that would allow medical marijuana dispensaries to start selling marijuana to adults 21 and older on Oct. 1. [Another bill](#) that reduces marijuana-related criminal penalties is making its way to the governor's desk.

Johnson said marijuana should no longer be classified as a drug as dangerous as heroin, that more money should be devoted to marijuana-related research, and that "we should focus more on helping people and less on incarcerating them."

Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), a strong advocate for changes to federal drug laws and a leader of the Oregon campaign to legalize, regulate and tax marijuana, discussed his efforts to reform outdated marijuana policy at the federal level.

"For years, Oregon has been far ahead of the federal government on marijuana policy," said Representative Blumenauer. "Part of this leadership comes with asking the tough regulatory questions around issues such as safety, enforcement, packaging, research and education. This would all be much easier without the confusing patchwork of federal and state laws that trap businesses and state regulators in the middle. I am working to reconcile these differences and reform our outdated federal marijuana policy."

Blumenauer has introduced bills to legalize and tax marijuana at the federal level, improve veterans' access to medical marijuana, reduce federal interference with medical marijuana programs and allow state legal marijuana businesses to deduct business expenses from their federal taxes like any other legal business.

David Rogers, executive director of American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, and Leah Mauer, a leader of a Mom's groups to reform Oregon drug laws, also said they plan to continue to improve Oregon's drug policies.

"The war on marijuana has been carried out with staggering racial bias," Rogers said. "By passing and implementing Measure 91, Oregon can celebrate a racial justice

victory. We have started to remove some of the justice systems' troubling collateral consequences that can ruin people's lives."

Before Measure 91, people of color in Oregon were more than twice as likely to be arrested or cited for marijuana than white people, according to the ACLU (see [p.172](#) of the PDF), and [7 percent of all arrests](#) in Oregon were for simple marijuana possession. Now police will no longer arrest people for responsible adult marijuana use and possession.

On Wednesday, [adults 21 and older in Oregon will be able to legally possess](#) up to 8 ounces of marijuana inside their home and up to 1 ounce of marijuana outside their home. Adults may also grow up to four plants, if they are out of public view.

Oregon will be the fourth state, in addition to Washington, D.C., to end marijuana prohibition. [Twenty-three states](#) have legalized marijuana in some form. Oregon voters in November 2014 decided to legalize marijuana, passing Measure 91 with [56 percent of the vote](#).

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