

Valley News -

Why a national marijuana law could be closer to reality in 2019

OKLAHOMA CITY – So far, the task of loosening marijuana laws has been left to individual states to implement. But that mission changed when the Democrats won control of the House of Representatives last month.

“The states have been carrying the water for the pro-marijuana forces for several years but that may finally start to change,” Sarah Lee Gossett Parrish, a cannabis industry lawyer, said. “The federal government is about to get involved in a big way. Uniform national marijuana laws are certainly now on the table.”

Oregon Democrat Rep. Earl Blumenauer has already laid out a blueprint to advance national marijuana legislation. Blumenauer’s plan could begin as soon as Democrats take the gavel, he said. His strategy would include starting to move the 37 bills currently unable to make it to the House floor under Republicans onto committee schedules, for hearings and proposed legislation.

Here are some of the House committees that could be looking at marijuana issues and what they would be considering:

In the House Judiciary Committee, Blumenauer wants the House to “de-schedule” marijuana. It is currently labeled a “Schedule 1” drug, the most tightly restricted category reserved for drugs that have “no currently accepted medical use.” Cannabis advocates have been trying to change that classification since 1972.

In the House Veterans Affairs Committee, hearings may be held on proposed legislation to give veterans access to medical marijuana.

In the House Financial Services Committee, the focus would be on banking changes. Right now, cannabis businesses are unable to use banks, causing them to be an all-cash business, which makes them more susceptible to robberies and violence. There are many other advantages for cannabis producers if they could have access to banking institutions.

Further optimism about the future of passing national marijuana laws is due to two major roadblocks being removed. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was fired by President Donald Trump and Texas Rep. Pete Sessions was defeated by Democrat Colin Allred. Although Jeff Sessions had more of a national profile, Sessions was arguably more important for pro-marijuana forces to remove since he was chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee. He has been credited with keeping almost all marijuana legislation from reaching the floor of Congress for a vote.

“No marijuana bill could get a floor vote under Representative Sessions,” Parrish said. “He was probably the biggest legislative roadblock to comprehensive national marijuana legislation. Now that he is gone, there is a lot of optimism that many of these bills may finally get a vote.”

Sarah Lee Gossett Parrish is an attorney who maintains a civil-litigation practice. She is a member of the National Cannabis Bar Association and National Cannabis Industry Association. She also is admitted to practice in all state and federal district courts in Oklahoma; the U. S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit and the United States Supreme Court. Parrish received her bachelor’s degree in letters from the University of Oklahoma, summa cum laude and as a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. She also served as chairman of the Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women for Oklahoma and was instrumental in

starting the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame. She received her doctorate in-law from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. For more information, visit <http://www.sarahleegossettparrish.com>.

Connect With Us

Valley News

111 W. Alvarado St.
Suite 200
Fallbrook, CA 92028
Ph: (760) 723-7319

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