

NEWS:

Marijuana Legalization Bill Clears Committee

MAY 12, 2017 - The House of Representatives may soon be debating a bill that could make Delaware the ninth state in the nation to legalize recreational marijuana.

Earlier this week, nine of the 13 members of the House Revenue & Finance Committee voted to release [the Delaware Marijuana Control Act](#).

"I may be the only person in this Hall who hasn't made up his mind on this bill," said committee member State Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Clayton.

Rep. Spiegelman said in trying to arrive at a decision he reached out to numerous sources, including some in Colorado, where recreational marijuana was legalized by voters in 2012.

While not resolving his dilemma, Rep. Spiegelman said one of the people he spoke with suggested Delaware could have the best marijuana laws in the country if officials here practiced some patience. "Let other states that are larger than us work out the problems," he told the committee. "Let the feds work out whatever the feds are going to do, and just wait."



State Rep.
Jeff Spiegelman

Rep. Spiegelman said while he is still undecided on the issue, he voted to release the bill from committee. However, he cautioned the bill's supporters that he is "increasing leery" of voting in favor of the measure should it be debated in the House.

"There is strong public support for ending marijuana prohibition in Delaware, and that was reflected in the committee vote," said Maggie Ellinger-Locke, legislative counsel for the [Marijuana Policy Project](#). "Most Americans now recognize that marijuana is less harmful than alcohol, and they think it is time for it to be treated that way. We hope the full House will follow the committee's lead and approve HB 110."



Earlier this week, a new coalition of groups authored a letter opposing the legislation. In the missive sent to the governor and state legislators, the

"Keep Delaware Safe and Healthy Coalition" maintained that legalizing recreational marijuana poses a threat to public health and safety.

Coalition members include the Medical Society of Delaware, the Delaware State Troopers Association, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, AAA Midatlantic, and Sunday Breakfast Mission (see graphic, above).

The bill is now on the House Ready List, making it eligible to be acted on by the full chamber. It will not be worked before June.

Any bill remaining active in the legislative pipeline when the 149th General Assembly ends its 2017 legislative session on June 30th will remain viable through next year.