



NEWS:

Bill to Legalize Recreational Marijuana Defeated in House

JUNE 29, 2018 -- [House Bill 110 \(as amended\)](#), seeking to make Delaware the ninth state to legalize recreational marijuana, failed to clear the House of Representatives Wednesday evening.

The measure garnered 21 "yes" votes in the 41-member chamber, but failed because it needed a three-fifths majority, or 25 votes for passage. Fifteen members voted "no," with the remaining five state representatives choosing not to cast a vote.

The super-majority (three-fifths) was needed because the bill would have created new fees and a new tax.

During the debate, opponents cited negative impacts from other states that have legalized marijuana.

State Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Dover South, undercut a claim that marijuana legalization would help ease the Delaware's opioid epidemic. "Opioid [overdose] deaths have increased, not decreased, since Colorado legalized marijuana for medical use starting in 2000," he told the chamber.

Concern about how legalization could increase instances of driving under the influence (DUI) in Delaware was a concern of State Rep. Steve Smyk, R-Milton-Lewes, who said Delaware's road safety has already been adversely impacted by the state's

decriminalized of marijuana in late 2015. "Since the decriminalization of marijuana more than half the blood sample of D-U-Is have tested positive for marijuana. Marijuana is by far the most common drug found in the systems of drivers involved in D-U-Is," he said.

State Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, said she would not support the legislation, referencing a recent state report covering the first 14 weeks of this year detailing Delaware infants exposed to illegal substances

while in utero. "One hundred and twenty seven infants were born exposed to [illicit] substances in Delaware," she told her colleagues. "What is shocking and very alarming is that over half of all those single-source infants had been exposed to marijuana during the pregnancy and were now impacted and had to have special plans of care."

Proponents of the bill touted legalized marijuana as a new source of state revenue. They also claimed that enacting the law would greatly improve the safety and quality of a substance already in wide use.

State Rep. Trey Paradee, D-Cheswold, said he believed lawmakers had an obligation to enact the bill. "This bill is going to pass," he said. "Maybe not tonight, but it is inevitable. ... In October 2016 the [University of Delaware survey](#) showed 61 percent of Delawareans want this."



State Rep. Ruth Briggs King