Canada has Legalized Marijuana

When Trudeau's Liberal Party was elected in 2015 he ran on a promise to legalize marijuana. Canada is about to realize that promise. The South American nation of Uruguay was the first and only to fully legalize cannabis. Uruguay legalized marijuana in 2013, and now Canada will be the second nation to do so, and the first wealthy nation to do it. The Senate approved Bill C-45, also known as the Cannabis Act, on June 18th.

We will legalize, regulate, and restrict access to marijuana. Canada's current system of marijuana prohibition does not work. It does not prevent young people from using marijuana and too many Canadians end up with criminal records for possessing small amounts of the drug." — Canada's Liberal Party

The new law will go into effect on October 17, 2018. The bill legalizes marijuana possession, growing cannabis, and selling it to adults. The federal government will still enforce remaining criminal sanctions like selling to minors and the licensing of cannabis production, and provincial governments will oversee sales, distribution, and other related regulations. This means that provinces will be able to impose stricter rules, like raising the minimum age.

Nine states in the US so far have legalized marijuana for recreational use and 29 states allow cannabis for medicinal use.

The United Nations' international drug treaties explicitly ban legalizing marijuana, so will be in violation of international law. The US is still considered to be in accordance with the treaties because federal law still prohibits cannabis.

Canada's decision to end cannabis criminalization should come as no surprise. Canadian marijuana policy has been at odds with the United States' policies for decades. Canadians allowed commercial cultivation of industrial hemp, species of marijuana that possesses zero psychoactivity, two decades ago. Canada also controls a federally licensed medical cannabis production and distribution program, a program that has been in place since 2001. In the U.S. federal law makes no legal distinction between marijuana and hemp.

Like in Canada, voters in the U.S. also endorse cannabis legalization. According to polling data reported last week, 68 percent of registered voters "support the legalization of marijuana." That is the highest percentage ever recorded in a nationwide, scientific survey. The support is mostly non-partisan. The poll showed that 77 percent of Democrats, 62 percent of independents, and 57 percent of Republicans want federal legalization.

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