

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

GOVERNOR MURPHY JOINS GOVERNORS NATIONWIDE IN BIPARTISAN CALL FOR PASSAGE OF THE STATES ACT

TRENTON — Governor Phil Murphy and 11 governors of both parties across the nation penned a joint letter to federal leadership, firmly expressing their support for the passage of the “Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States (STATES)” Act, a bill introduced by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Cory Gardner (R-CO). Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) is a co-sponsor of the bill.

Following Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ decision to rescind an Obama-era policy allowing states to reform their own marijuana laws with appropriate safeguards, this bill ensures that every state has the right within its own borders to determine its best approach to marijuana, subject to widely agreed-upon parameters such as a minimum age of 21 to purchase marijuana for recreational use.

“The people of New Jersey suffered for eight years waiting for broader access to the state’s medical marijuana program to meet the needs of patients in need,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “I support Senator Warren’s and Senator Gardner’s efforts to entrust states with the ability to protect patients, providers and businesses, as New Jersey seeks to expand marijuana for both medical and adult use.”

The governors highlighted that, as of today, 46 states permit the use of some form of medical marijuana and eight states have made adult-use marijuana legal. These programs reflect the will of the people as expressed through both ballot initiatives and legislative action.

The following governors signed the letter:

Gov. Phil Murphy (NJ)

Gov. Bill Walker (AK)

Gov. Jerry Brown (CA)

Gov. John Hickenlooper (CO)

Gov. Larry Hogan (MD)

Gov. Charlie Baker (MA)

Gov. Brian Sandoval (NV)

Gov. Doug Burgum (ND)

Gov. Andrew Cuomo (NY)

Gov. Tom Wolf (PA)

Gov. Kate Brown (OR)

Gov. Jay Inslee (WA)

Text of the letter may be found below:

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June 8, 2018

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McConnell, Leader Pelosi, and Leader Schumer:

As bipartisan governors of states that have laws permitting or decriminalizing marijuana for adult use or medical purposes, we urge you to continue protections for patients, providers, and businesses against federal prosecution, by passing the "Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States (STATES) Act."

As of today, 46 states permit the use of some form of medical marijuana and 8 states have made it legal for adult-use. These programs reflect the will of the people as expressed through ballot initiatives and legislative action.

Recognizing the evolving position of states, in 2014 Congress began protecting medical marijuana states from federal interference by prohibiting the Department of Justice from preventing the implementation of state laws that authorize the use, distribution, possession or cultivation of medical marijuana. The Department of Justice likewise underscored its respect for state action by providing federal prosecutors guidance in the form of the "Cole Memo", which directed limited federal resources away from prosecuting marijuana operations operating in compliance with state law.

Unfortunately, the rescission of the Cole Memo earlier this year has complicated the marketplace for businesses that states now deem legal. This return to one-size-fits-all federal prohibition is incongruent with reality, undermines the 46 carefully-crafted regulatory structures and impedes states' ability to be effective laboratories of democracy.

Furthermore, current federal law precludes banks from engaging with legal entities that are complying with state laws. As a result, these companies are forced to become cash-only businesses, creating unnecessary burdens and risks.

The STATES Act restores the federal-state balance by codifying protections for those operating in accordance with state law. The STATES Act is not about whether marijuana should be legal or illegal; it is about respecting the authority of states to act, lead and respond to the evolving needs and attitudes of their citizens. Whether a state maintains the prohibition or chooses a different path, the STATES Act ensures that the federal government is a partner rather than an impediment - an objective the federal government should always strive to achieve.

Our states have acted with deliberation and care to implement programs through thoughtful and comprehensive legislation and regulations. Our citizens have spoken, we are responding. We ask that Congress recognize and respect our states' efforts by supporting and passing the STATES Act.

Sincerely,

Governor Phil Murphy
New Jersey

Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts

Governor Jerry Brown
California

Governor Bill Walker
Alaska

Governor John Hickenlooper
Colorado

Governor Larry Hogan
Maryland

Governor Andrew Cuomo
New York

Governor Brian Sandoval
Nevada

Governor Doug Burgum
North Dakota

Governor Kate Brown
Oregon

Governor Tom Wolf
Pennsylvania

Governor Jay Inslee
Washington

CC:

Senator Elizabeth Warren

Senator Cory Gardner

Representative David Joyce

Representative Earl Blumenauer

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