

Brooks Bawden Moore Blog

A collaborative site to share information and analysis on the latest congressional, administrative, regulatory, and Federal Government issues that are of interest to the public safety community.

House Democrats Postpone Vote on Marijuana Decriminalization Bill

👤 [melissanee](#) 🕒 [September 17, 2020](#) 📁 [Uncategorized](#)

House Democratic leaders are postponing a planned vote next week on legislation to decriminalize marijuana at the federal level following concerns from moderates reluctant to take up the measure before any coronavirus relief package. House lawmakers will now likely vote on the bill after the election, during the lame duck session.

Please see [BBM's earlier blog post](#) for detailed information on the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act. The article below describes the current state of play in detail.

Please contact the BBM team if you have any questions or need additional information.

The Hill – House Democrats postpone vote on marijuana decriminalization bill

BY CRISTINA MARCOS AND SCOTT WONG – 09/17/20

House Democratic leaders are postponing a planned vote next week on legislation to decriminalize marijuana at the federal level following concerns from moderates reluctant to take up the measure before any coronavirus relief package.

Leadership indicated to Democrats that the previously planned vote would be delayed, according to two lawmakers.

Centrist Democrats who have been agitating for action on coronavirus relief after months of stalled negotiations had **expressed concern** about taking a vote on marijuana legalization before work on what they see as must-pass legislation is completed.

<https://bbm-dcblog.com/2020/09/17/house-democrats-postpone-vote-on-marijuana-decriminalization-bill/>

House Majority Leader **Steny Hoyer** (D-Md.) notably left the legislation, called the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act, off the announced floor schedule for next week.

Hoyer later said in an emailed statement that Democratic leaders are “committed” to scheduling a vote on the bill before the end of the year.

“Right now, the House is focused relentlessly on securing agreement to stave off a damaging government shutdown and continuing to do its job addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Later this autumn, the House will pass the MORE Act with strong support as yet another crucial step toward making our justice system fair for all Americans,” he said.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman **Jerry Nadler** (D-N.Y.), the bill’s sponsor, suggested the vote could be put off until after the November elections.

“It might get postponed to the lame-duck [session],” Nadler said.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) also notably left the marijuana legislation off the announced floor schedule for next week.

While moderate lawmakers had pushed for postponing the vote, progressives expressed frustration with holding off on passing a historic marijuana legalization bill that is a major part of liberals’ racial justice efforts.

“I feel like the impulse to delay the expungement of people’s records is a fear-based response to [Senate Majority Leader] **Mitch McConnell** [R-Ky.] and the Republican Party. And I personally don’t think that we should be governing that way. I don’t think that when Democrats have power, like a House majority, that we should be drafting our agenda based out of fear of Republicans,” said Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (D-N.Y.).

Ocasio-Cortez also questioned why moderates would push for delaying the marijuana legalization legislation when the House is still voting on other bills before taking up any additional COVID-19 relief.

“We already had a COVID vote. If the argument is that we should not be voting on legislation because we haven’t voted on COVID yet, then why are we voting on anything? Why is it that the one racial justice bill is the one that’s being singled out?” Ocasio-Cortez said.

House Democrats passed a \$3 trillion coronavirus aid package in May, although some vulnerable lawmakers in competitive districts have called for taking additional votes this month on coronavirus relief before leaving Washington until after the elections.

The MORE Act, called the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act, would remove federal penalties on marijuana by removing it from the Controlled Substances Act and apply the change retroactively to prior and pending convictions.

It would also authorize a sales tax on marijuana products to fund grant programs to provide job training, legal aid and mentoring programs to individuals impacted by national efforts to combat illegal drug use — which has particularly affected communities of color — as well as assist small businesses in the marijuana industry owned by “socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.”

Twenty states and the District of Columbia have decriminalized marijuana in small amounts for personal consumption, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Hoyer said Thursday that the House is expected to vote next week on a short-term spending bill to avert a government shutdown on Oct. 1, as well as legislation to promote clean energy. He also said the House may take up legislation to require U.S.-traded companies that conduct business in China's Xinjiang region to disclose whether their products are made in or sourced from Uyghur internment camps or factories with forced labor practices.

Share this:

 [Twitter](#)  [Facebook](#)

Like

Be the first to like this.

Related

[House Set to Vote on Marijuana Legislation in September](#)

[Republican Leaders Release \\$1 Trillion Coronavirus Stimulus](#)

[House Aims to Pass Stopping Government Funding Bill Next Week](#)