

# Washington considers overhaul of pot regulation

## Five years after legalization

By GENE JOHNSON  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Five years after Washington state launched its pioneering legal marijuana market, officials are proposing an overhaul of the state's industry rules, with plans for boosting minority ownership of pot businesses, paving the way for home deliveries of medical cannabis and letting the smallest growers increase the size of their operations to become more competitive.

Liquor and Cannabis Board Director Rick Garza detailed the proposals — part of what the board calls “Cannabis 2.0” — in an interview with The Associated Press. It's an effort to picture what the legal marijuana market will look like over the next five years, after spending the past five years largely regulating by reaction as the difficulties of building an industry from infancy absorbed the agency's attention.

“We've typically been so challenged with the issues of the day we haven't been looking out long term to determine what the future looks like,” Garza said.

The board has been freeing up its bandwidth by coordinating with other agencies to share the responsibility of regulating the market, such as having the Department of Ecology oversee the certification of marijuana testing labs and the Department of Financial Institutions examine the sometimes complicated ownership structures of licensed cannabis businesses.



Elaine Thompson/AP Photo  
Cannabis consultant Juan Aguilar, left, assists customers Bill, right, and Nize Nylen and their son, Russell, shop for edible marijuana products in the Herban Legends pot shop in Seattle last year.

One big-picture issue the board could rethink is whether to abandon the state's seed-to-sale marijuana tracking program, which has long been beset by software issues, sometimes grinding business to a halt, in favor of a system where businesses report their transactions to the board and are then audited. Another is whether to prepare to allow marijuana exports, as Oregon did this year, in the event the federal government approves it.

### New legislation

For the next session of the Legislature, the board has proposed two bills. One would create what some critics describe as a long-overdue “social equity” program, encouraging greater ownership of marijuana businesses by minorities, women and military veterans. Part of the rationale of legalizing mari-

juana in Washington state in 2012 was to remedy the disproportionate effect the drug war has had on people of color, but minority ownership of cannabis businesses in the state remains paltry.

While Washington is not currently issuing any more marijuana licenses, 11 of the more than 500 retailers have surrendered their licenses, Garza said. Under the board's proposal, those could be reissued, or, if cities or counties agree to increase the number of pot shops within their boundaries, new licenses could be granted — this time, to participants in the social equity program.

Businesses would be eligible if they are owned by a woman, minority or veteran, or if a majority of its ownership group are members of a “protected class” under state anti-discrimination law. Applicants would be barred

from consideration if any owner already has a majority share of another cannabis retail license.

The legislation would also create a technical assistance program run by the Department of Commerce that would provide grants totaling at least \$100,000 per year to help minority-, woman- or veteran-owned businesses navigate the licensing process, receive compliance and financial training, and buy equipment, software or facilities.

The Washington Cannabis Association, an industry group, said it agrees there is a need for a social equity program, and it's been working on its own version.

“We think there's an opportunity to go even beyond” what the board is proposing, said spokesman Aaron Pickus.

Another legislative pro-

posal would allow struggling tier-one producers — the smallest size, limited to 2,000 square feet of plants — to sell medical-grade product directly to the state's 36,000 registered marijuana patients. The patients have long complained that they have a hard time finding medical-grade cannabis, which must go through additional testing for pesticides and heavy metals, in retail stores, and Garza said the proposal could help the patients while giving the growers an incentive to offer more medically compliant product.

The tier-one growers could sell to patients onsite, with other growers at indoor farmers-market-style locations, or by delivery, Garza said. Local jurisdictions would have to approve, and to avoid competition with other licensed retailers, the growers or farmers markets would have to be at least 3 miles away from established retailers.

Any proposal to allow delivery or sales by small growers is certain to be controversial, as other retailers might object to additional competition. Garza said the board will consider industry feedback.

“There's going to be real concerns by retailers out

there,” he said. “If we're going to do that, we've got to be cautious.”

### Craft growers

Even more significantly for the smallest growers, the board wants to allow them to expand, first to 5,000 square feet and then possibly to 8,000 square feet. Those producers have long complained the tier-one licenses, designed to ensure craft growers have a place in the market, are so restrictive that they can't succeed. Though they must make similar investments in security, insurance and product tracking as the largest growers, they are allowed to grow and sell only tiny fraction of what the largest growers produce.

Paige Berger, CEO of Hygge Farms in Onalaska, said she's excited about the board's proposal. She initially obtained a tier-one license because she didn't have enough money to invest in a larger operation. Now, she said, she's hamstrung by her limited size: She can only produce enough marijuana to have product in 10 licensed cannabis shops.

“I can't get out there and expand my brand to what I think it could do,” Berger said.

## Scrutiny could ease on public forest projects

By JES BURNS  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to reduce the public's role in shaping the way it applies federal environmental laws to projects on public lands.

The agency says the changes would help land managers “make timelier decisions based on high quality, science-based analysis.”

Environmental groups are calling the proposed changes a giveaway to the timber industry that will allow projects on national forests to be approved with far less involvement from the public.

The changes concern how the Forest Service operates under the National Environmental Policy Act, the law



Jes Burns/Oregon Public Broadcasting  
Thinning, mowing and prescribed fire are used in Ponderosa pine forests to maintain an open forest floor.

that provides much of the framework for environmental protection in the United States. Under the law, projects on public lands have to go through various levels of environmental analysis to ensure that detri-

mental impacts are not too great. These environmental analyses can take months or even years to complete and include various levels of public involvement and feedback.

Critics of how the For-

est Service currently applies NEPA say the process is way too cumbersome, slows projects and permit applications down too much, and has led to backlogs in needed natural resource management.

“The paperwork exercise that they have to go through just don't match the scope and scale of the problem,” said Travis Joseph, president of the Portland-based American Forest Resource Council, a timber industry trade association.

The proposed changes are being framed in terms of reducing the backlog of forest restoration and wild-fire mitigation projects by streamlining the NEPA process. The Forest Service says the backlog is 80 million acres.

## OHSU restarts heart transplant program

By KRISTIAN FODEN-VENCIL  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The organization that oversees organ transplants in the United States has approved an application from Oregon Health & Science University to resume heart transplants.

OHSU stopped performing the procedure last year after four cardiologists left abruptly.

A study by heart transplant experts from around the globe, commissioned by OHSU, found that workload, personality clashes, burnout and an overall lack of support from the health system led to the department's implosion.

But now OHSU administrators say they have successfully recruited three cardiologists and will resume heart transplant work. They're from the University of California, San Francisco, Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston

and University of Vermont Medical Center.

“OHSU's heart transplant program has a long history of serving the state of Oregon, providing more than 700 heart transplant procedures to date,” said OHSU President Danny Jacobs in a statement. “With the successful recruitment of cardiologists from some of the preeminent programs in the country, we are pleased to resume the full spectrum of care for Oregonians with advanced heart failure, in need of heart transplantation.”

The university faced a tough deadline: If it didn't reopen the unit by September, the teaching hospital would need to be recertified by the United Network for Organ Sharing — meaning the first 10 transplants would be performed at university expense.

“We are thrilled with our progress toward building the right team and receiving the appropriate approvals to provide heart transplants, in

addition to mechanical circulatory support devices and many other options for advanced heart failure,” said John Hunter, OHSU chief executive officer, in a statement.

Earlier this year, a second hospital system in Oregon, Providence Health & Services, received a \$75 million dollar gift from Nike co-founder Phil Knight and his wife, Penny Knight, to start a new heart program.

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  4. Click Settings or Control Panel.
  5. In the search box, type Screen Saver, click on Change Screen Saver.
  6. Change “None” to “Photos”.
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  8. Set the speed at which to transition the pictures.



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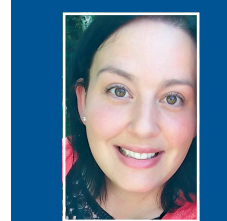
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