

MORE Movement on Federal Legalization of Cannabis?

Cannabis Business Legal News

By Darren Grady on November 22, 2019

Earlier this week, on November 20th, the House of Representatives judiciary committee approved a bill –The Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment, and Expungement Act (“the MORE Act”) – that would legalize cannabis at the federal level. The next step in the process will be a formal floor vote in the House, assuming the Act is not marked by any other committees for review. This is the first time a congressional committee has passed a bill that would legalize cannabis at the federal level. The Act will now need to pass the House vote before moving on to the Senate for additional review and a vote.

The MORE Act would be revolutionary legislation for the cannabis industry and individuals adversely affected by harsh penalties for cannabis convictions. The Act would officially remove cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act (“the CSA”), approve the distribution of resources for certain communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, and establish the Cannabis Justice Office (a governmental organization that would levy a 5% sales tax on cannabis sales in states where the plant has been legalized).

The removal of cannabis from the CSA would be a landmark event, as the states would then officially be in charge of making their own laws relative to cannabis without the concern of running afoul of federal law. Over thirty states and the District of Columbia have already legalized medical cannabis, and eleven states (and D.C.) have passed laws legalizing recreational use. Apart from some of the additional social justice benefits of this legislation (e.g., courts could expunge certain cannabis-related convictions and reduce sentences and the Act would ban federal housing discrimination of cannabis users), the MORE Act, if passed, could inspire otherwise hesitant industries, for instance the banking industry, to finally provide services to legally operating cannabis businesses.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), one of the most outspoken congressional advocates for legalization, commented that the MORE Act “will be one of the most historic events in our movement... [it] is the most comprehensive cannabis legislation to date.” While some think the Act may stall out in the Senate, those in the industry, or businesses looking for the federal status of cannabis to change before entering the market, should monitor the progress of the MORE Act very

closely, for obvious reasons. Those businesses should also speak with trusted counsel about how this significant piece of legislation could change the landscape of the industry, and the nation, forever.

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