

Governor signs historic cannabis bill into law

Written by gallupsun
Monday, 12 April 2021 15:40



New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law April 12 a law legalizing adult-use cannabis, following other states in a measure approved by the state Legislature after the chief executive called them into a special session to examine this particular issue last month.

HB 2, sponsored by Democrats — three of them representatives and two senators, none of which were from McKinley County — had been awaiting the governor's signature for a few days until Lujan Grisham could sign legislation that came out of the general session, Nora Meyers Sackett, press secretary to the governor, told the Gallup Sun.

New Mexico becomes the latest state in the U.S. to legalize adult-use cannabis, and is only the fifth state to enact it through its state Legislature.

Lujan Grisham praised the new law in a prepared statement on Monday.

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“The legalization of adult-use cannabis paves the way for the creation of a new economic driver in our state with the promise of creating thousands of good paying jobs for years to come,” she said. “We are going to increase consumer safety by creating a bona fide industry. We’re going to start righting past wrongs of this country’s failed war on drugs. And we’re going to break new ground in an industry that may well transform New Mexico’s economic future for the better.”

The governor’s signature today launches an administrative process that will culminate in the launch of commercial sales for adults no later than April 1, 2022. The issuance of licenses to conduct commercial cannabis activity will begin no later than Jan. 1, 2022.

One of HB 2’s sponsors, Sen. Katy Duhigg, D-Albuquerque, said in a prepared statement that while the bill promises to be a boost to the state economy, “smart regulation in order to protect the public and entrepreneurs seeking to get into the business.”

“I’m proud of the work we did to ensure that we are creating a fair and equitable program that has a low barrier to entry,” she said. “At the same time, proper regulation and oversight will keep our successful medical cannabis program intact and help new businesses grow while keeping consumers safe.”

Gross receipts tax and local taxes apply to the value of the adult-use purchase. Medical cannabis, meanwhile, is and will remain exempt from GRT and excise taxes.

The legislation creates a Public Health Advisory Board to monitor cannabis use and data pertaining to the health effects of legalizing cannabis. In addition, the Department of Health is required to provide annual reports, including information on youth access, driving and road safety, workplace safety, consumer and product safety and emergency room visits involving cannabis.

The new law will authorize the expungement of old low-level cannabis convictions from the record of what is expected to be tens of thousands of New Mexicans and make possible the potential early release of low-level convicted cannabis offenders who are currently incarcerated.

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