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EXTRACT

What does a Donald Trump presidency mean for marijuana reform?

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Tuesday's general election was a watershed moment for U.S. marijuana reform, signaling what many hoped would be the beginning of the end for federal marijuana prohibition. Four states, including California, voted to legalize recreational marijuana, and another four voted to legalize or expand medical marijuana.

Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have now legalized marijuana for medical use. Another eight states, plus the District of Columbia, have now legalized the drug for recreational adult use.

But marijuana's big night was swiftly overshadowed by Donald Trump's presidential win and questions about what his time in office will mean for criminal justice and drug policy reform across the country.

Trump has voiced support for states' rights to legalize medical and recreational marijuana, but it's not clear if he intends to set policies that reflect his stated positions.

What concerns many drug-policy reformers even more than Trump's own stances, are those of the people Trump may appoint to key cabinet and justice department roles.

"Trump has surrounded himself with anti-drug hardliners who are out of step with the country's, and the Republican Party's, gradual acceptance of the plant," Alex Halperin

writes in his latest "WeedWeek" newsletter.

Halperin points to Trump's vice-presidential pick, Mike Pence, as someone with a record of supporting tough drug-war policies.

Pence voted to increase funding to fight drugs in Mexico and voted to allow military personnel to patrol U.S. borders to battle drugs and terrorism. As Indiana governor, Pence said he was interested in reducing prison populations, but resisted efforts to do so through sentencing reform, and even reinstated mandatory minimum sentencing for some drug crimes in 2016.

"I think we need to focus on reducing crime, not reducing penalties," he said.

Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, said he is "deeply concerned" by the prospect of Trump's presidency, as reported by the Washington Post.

"His most likely appointees to senior law enforcement positions — Rudy Giuliani and Chris Christie — are no friends of marijuana reform, nor is his vice president," Nadelmann said in a statement.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a staunch marijuana opponent, has pledged to double down on prohibition if given the chance. During the Republican presidential primary race, Christie vowed to aggressively enforce federal marijuana prohibition in states with legal marijuana, and he criticized President Obama's administration for looking the other way on the issue.

"This president doesn't enforce the marijuana laws in this country because he doesn't agree with them, and he allows states to go ahead and do whatever they want on a substance that's illegal. He allows lawlessness throughout this country," Christie said in 2015.

States have been able to move forward with marijuana legalization initiatives largely because the federal government has allowed them to do so thus far.

The Obama administration embraced a hands-off approach with state marijuana reform, but Trump's administration could certainly change that dynamic, if it saw fit.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) remains optimistic that public opinion on marijuana is now strong enough to prevent Trump's administration from interfering with state laws in any major way.

Recent polls show 61 percent of Americans think recreational marijuana should be legal for adult use, and 89 percent think medical marijuana should be legal.

"Go against millions of supporters, against states' rights, against where the public is?" Blumenauer told the Washington Post. "It would be the beginning of tremendous problems for the Trump administration that they don't need."

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