



## **Sheriffs and Chiefs Raise Safety Concerns About Marijuana Legalization Proposal**

*Recreational Cannabis Bill Contains Known Public Safety Threats And Loopholes*

**May 8, 2019 (Springfield, Ill.)** - Local law enforcement officials are deeply concerned with the recently unveiled Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (SB 7), citing proven risks to public safety and mistakes made in other states. As local officials tasked with keeping communities and streets safe, the Illinois Sheriffs' Association expresses concern with the legislation.

"This proposal is a public safety risk that jeopardizes the security of your neighborhoods and safety of our roadways," said Jim Kaitschuk, Executive Director of the Illinois Sheriffs' Association. "Law enforcement has been clear, Illinois must not repeat the mistakes of other states that have jeopardized public safety, increased traffic fatalities and encouraged criminal and cartel activities to move into neighborhoods."

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police opposes the legalization of recreational marijuana use given the immense safety and health risks. If legalization is to proceed, the Association believes the following elements of SB 7 must be addressed:

- Studies have indicated that fatal cannabis-related traffic accidents increase, as much as 31 to 174 percent in states that have legalized recreational marijuana, and the measure has insufficient deterrence to prevent impaired driving - risking the safety of Illinois' roads.
- "Home Grow" is a loophole that invites foreign cartels, drug traffickers and organized crime to move into neighborhoods and has proven to be a disaster in other states. Home grow makes law enforcement activities more difficult by undermining the system of legal, commercial cannabis.
- Mass expungement of records will give a free pass to felons who were convicted of distributing and manufacturing large quantities of illegal drugs. The 180-day deadline will burden the legal system and law enforcement. Felony convictions prohibit eligibility for a FOID card, and mass expungement will allow previously prohibited convicted felons to obtain firearms.
- Legalization legislation will significantly increase burdens on law enforcement and the allocation of tax revenue to statewide and local law enforcement through a grant process set at 8 percent is insufficient.

"We have been providing data and factual information about the serious risks involved with legalizing recreational marijuana, but most of the major objections we raised have been ignored. The bill contains many loopholes that will allow recreational marijuana to go largely unregulated, and this will be harmful to our local communities and cause additional danger on the roads and highways. Enforcement will prove to be difficult and next to impossible in some cases. This process needs to slow down so that we can truly learn from mistakes made in other states," said Chief Steven Stelter of Westchester, President of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police.

Law enforcement officials are concerned the legislation does not have sufficient protections and deterrence to discourage impaired driving under the influence of cannabis. Numerous commissions and studies have found an indisputable link between an increase in collisions and traffic accidents, including a significant increase of fatal traffic accidents in states with recreational marijuana.

A 2018 study published in the Journal of Transport and Health determined that states that decriminalized or legalized marijuana had a dramatic increase in cannabis-related fatal crashes of 31-174 percent.

In numerous states that have legalized home grow of marijuana, foreign-cartels and organized crime have rushed into the state, resulting in a proliferation of grow houses and associated crime. These neighborhood drug cultivation centers masquerade in residential neighborhoods under the auspices of home grow but are in fact valuable components of narco-traffickers.

“Home grow has proven to be an invitation to cartels and drug traffickers to move into our neighborhoods and it has no place in any legalization effort. Inviting and encouraging the development of an unregulated, untaxed and unsafe drug cultivation industry in our neighborhoods is ridiculous and a threat to public safety,” said Knox County Sheriff David Clague, President of the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association . “Equally problematic is that home grow makes it impossible for law enforcement to distinguish between legal and illegal products, frustrating and complicating the job of keeping our communities safe.”

Under the framework, despite the new burdens and responsibilities, law enforcement receives less funding from the taxation of recreational marijuana than past-due state vendors and funding is distributed through a grant process, raising questions about how all local agencies will benefit. The amount of funding for state and local law enforcement must be increased to meet the increased safety burdens.

The Illinois Sheriffs’ Association is continuing its Just Facts public awareness campaign to ensure that families know all of the facts and risks associated with the legalization of marijuana.

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