

# Felzkowski, Agard discuss path ahead for marijuana legalization in Wisconsin

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A Republican proponent of medical marijuana says getting GOP support for a related bill this session may require adding restrictions on how the substance can be used.

Speaking Friday during a webinar hosted by the Wisconsin Policy Forum, Sen. Mary Felzkowski said any proposal to legalize medical marijuana will need the support of both the state's medical community and law enforcement.

Among her Republican colleagues, she said "smoking is off the table for our caucuses," noting members are concerned about second-hand smoke affecting small children. She said any bill to allow medical use will likely focus on tinctures, oils and patches for patients that struggle with swallowing.

"As I've looked at other states and how they've progressed ... it seems to be the norm, where smoking was not allowed in the majority of states in the beginning," the Irma Republican said. "Some get to a flower as one of the forms later on, or a bud, but I think in order to pass this in Wisconsin, the compromise will be absolutely no smoking."

Also on Friday's webinar, a longtime recreational marijuana advocate, Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, argued the most dangerous thing about marijuana in Wisconsin is that it remains illegal. She referenced WPF's recent report showing more than half of Wisconsin residents over age 21 live within a 75-minute drive from a legal pot retailer in a nearby state.

"Prohibition did not work with alcohol, it didn't work with margarine, and it's not working with cannabis policy in our state ... being an island of prohibition, as Wisconsin is, does not provide more safety and security for our state," the Madison Dem said. "Additionally, it does not provide for the prosperity that we could be offering, as well as personal liberties and freedom to our residents."

Agard acknowledged the uphill battle that full legalization faces in Wisconsin, adding “I’m not delusional.” But she noted more than 60 percent of Wisconsin residents support it based on Marquette Law School polling.

While the debate in Wisconsin continues, both Michigan and Illinois have legalized marijuana for recreational use. And Minnesota is expected to do the same this year, WPF Senior Research Associate Ari Brown said during Friday’s webinar.

Felzkowski noted both Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg and Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, have said “medical marijuana is possible this session, and they felt there was a high probability that it could get done.”

And though a previous GOP medical marijuana bill created several sessions ago is “very obsolete,” according to Felzkowski, conversations with growers, processors and medical experts are informing the ongoing effort.

While Felzkowski said recreational marijuana is likely not on the horizon for Wisconsin, she expressed confidence that a medical bill could happen this session, adding “compromise is the word of the day.”

Watch the full discussion here:

<https://wiseye.org/2023/03/31/wisconsin-policy-forum-shifting-marijuana-policies-in-neighbor-states-and-whats-next-in-wisconsin/>

See the recent WPF report:

<https://wispolicyforum.org/research/changing-midwest-marijuana-landscape-impact-s-wisconsin/>

*-By Alex Moe*