

From: Britt Bublitz britt@cschuler.com
Subject: Re: Politico//First weed bill in Congress aims at gun rights
Date: January 18, 2023 at 1:45 PM
To: Carol Schuler carol@cschuler.com

BB

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On Jan 18, 2023, at 1:31 PM, Carol Schuler <carol@cschuler.com> wrote:

You made the newsletter! We should all subscribe to this newsletter if you aren't already! Enjoy - Cheers, Carol

From: POLITICO Pro's Morning Cannabis <newsletter@email.politicopro.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 18, 2023 5:47 AM
To: Paul Demko <pdemko@politico.com>
Subject: First weed bill in Congress aims at gun rights

Jan 18, 2023

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BY [MONA ZHANG](#), [NATALIE FERTIG](#) AND [PAUL DEMKO](#)

QUICK FIX

- **Gun ownership rights is focus of the first cannabis bill introduced** in the Republican-controlled House.
- **Union Square Travel Agency is poised to be the next nonprofit-owned dispensary** to open in New York. The store is majority owned by The Doe Fund, which provides services to homeless and formerly incarcerated populations.
- **The FDA sent cannabis quality guidance to the White House for review.** If the draft is any indication, the document is more about compliance than quality.

IT'S WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18. WELCOME TO POLITICO'S CANNABIS NEWSLETTER. A Michigan dispensary [is holding a sweepstakes to win free weed for a year](#). Send us tips and story ideas: [Mona](#) at mzhang@politico.com, [Natalie](#) at nfertig@politico.com and [Paul](#) at pdemko@politico.com. And follow Pro: [@POLITICOPro](#).

ON THE HILL

FIRST WEED BILL OF 2023 — There's no question that the 118th Congress will have different cannabis policy vibes than the previous one, Democrats in control of both chambers. The [first weed bill introduced under Republican leadership](#) in the House would protect gun rights of medical marijuana patients.

The bill — introduced by Rep. [Alex Mooney](#) (R-W.Va.) and cosponsored by Cannabis Caucus Co-Chair Rep. [Brian Mast](#) (R-Fla.) and Rep. [Thomas Massie](#) (R-Ky.) — is similar to the GRAM Act, which extended gun ownership protections to recreational marijuana users. The GRAM Act was part of a trio of weed bills [that Senators hoped to add](#) to must-pass legislation at the end of last year — [an attempt that ultimately failed](#).

So what? One advocate thinks the bill's introduction is a very good sign that something cannabis-related is possible in this Congress.

“It’s proof that marijuana legislation or any type of marijuana bill isn’t the third rail for Republicans that it was once considered to be,” said former GOP Maryland state lawmaker and legalization advocate Don Murphy.

Mooney is a savvy politician, Murphy said, and leading with a cannabis bill shows he thinks his constituents will support the concept. West Virginia has legal medical marijuana, but not recreational weed — and Mooney has already announced he’s running for Senate. A lawmaker with sights set on statewide office would likely shy away from a perceived risky move.

“Here’s a guy who’s very dialed into the party politics of primaries,” Murphy added. “He’s still going to go out front on this issue.”

THE STATE OF MARIJUANA

NEW YORK SLOWLY MOVES FORWARD — Housing Works remains the [only regulated marijuana dispensary](#) open in New York. But several others are in the pipeline, including Union Square Travel Agency, which plans to open up next month in Manhattan.

The dispensary is 51 percent-owned by The Doe Fund, which provides programming for the homeless and formerly incarcerated. The nonprofit is partnering with the company Harbour Community, which will operate the dispensary and have a minority stake in the operation.

Overcoming hurdles: Raising capital and securing real estate remain the biggest stumbling blocks, particularly as a new company without a track record, said Arana Hankin-Biggers, president of Union Square Travel Agency.

“We probably knocked on 50 landlords’ [doors],” said Paul Yau, CEO of Union Square Travel Agency. “Federal illegality [and] getting through condo boards or co-op boards is challenging.”

Staffing up: On Tuesday, Director of Retail Mike Conway was conducting a group interview for potential employees. Because the company is staffing up so quickly, Conway was eschewing the typical interview process in favor of group activities.



Prospective employees listen to Mike Conway, director of retail for Union Square Travel Agency, explain the group interview process. | Mona Zhang/POLITICO

Conway told the seven aspiring staffers that they’d be doing team-building exercises, like building a marshmallow tower. He explained the responsibility of budtenders, particularly when it comes to ensuring that a customer doesn’t have a bad experience with an edible that could put them off of cannabis.

The company has received over 550 applications for dispensary

The company has received over 300 applications for temporary associates, and 150 to 200 for supervisors, Conway said. They plan to hire eight dispensary supervisors and about 50 staffers for the location when it opens up to the public Feb. 13.

Related: Housing Works was hit with [a lawsuit over its website](#) failing to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, [Sam Reisman reports](#).

DEALING WITH THE COMPETITION — Three New York City Council members will host a rally outside City Hall at 9 a.m. today — ahead of a [joint committee hearing on the proliferation of unlicensed cannabis sellers](#).

Lawmakers are concerned about the impact of unlicensed sales on public health and safety. But some in the cannabis industry are expected to push back against any efforts at increased enforcement.

WES MOORE'S WEED WORD JUMBLE — When POLITICO's Brakton Booker interviewed Maryland's incoming Democratic governor Wes Moore, he asked a question many lawmakers and advocates in legal states are wrestling with: You've decriminalized weed and made it available for legal sale, but do you prosecute unlicensed operators? Like many others, Moore didn't have a clear answer.

"We cannot have a process that takes 18 to 24 months to roll out, because if this goes on too long, what you're doing is you're inviting the illegal market back into it. Then you're going to run into some of the same challenges that some of these other states are having or have had," Moore said.

Check out [their full conversation in The Recast](#).

HEMP WATCH

FDA SENDS CANNABIS QUALITY GUIDANCE TO WHITE HOUSE — The FDA has finished work on cannabis quality guidance and sent the document to the White House, [POLITICO's Alexander Gaffney reports](#). The guidance focuses on statutory requirements restricting Delta-9 THC in hemp.

Many involved in the hemp industry have brought up the need for quality standards, given the potential for contaminants, use of solvents, and the lack of data on efficacy and safety of CBD products. The draft guidance was mostly focused on compliance rather than quality, Gaffney reports.

What's next: The final guidance is expected to be published in the first quarter of this year. But the [typical timeline for review](#) could be complicated by recent medical marijuana legislation and President Biden's review of marijuana's Schedule I status.

Meanwhile, the FDA continues to police CBD sellers: The agency sent warnings to [Purecraft](#), [Medical Mikes](#) and [PharmaCanna](#) earlier this month for marketing CBD for treating or preventing Covid-19.

NASDA'S FARM BILL PRIORITIES — The 2023 Farm Bill is one of seven policy priorities for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the organization said Tuesday. NASDA is advocating for changing the federal definition of hemp from 0.3 percent Delta-9 THC to 1 percent total THC in the farm bill.

The proposed change would "enable farmers to plant more seed varieties," [according to NASDA](#). It would also give "farmers greater assurance their crop will be viable."

MINNESOTA CO-OP ASSISTS CANNABIS BEVERAGE

PRODUCERS — A new Minnesota co-op will serve the state's burgeoning market for hemp-derived beverages. [Fair State Brewing Cooperative is launching](#) Chill State Collective, which will offer services like manufacturing capacity, sales assistance and distribution. The co-op's initial members include cannabis beverage producers Happi, Bent Paddle and Cann.

Background: On July 1, Minnesota [legalized hemp-derived edibles and beverages](#) with a THC potency level of up to 5 milligrams per product. The lightly regulated industry has sparked concerns about public health risks, but entrepreneurs have embraced the opportunity.

Meanwhile, the push to pass legislation establishing a taxed, regulated recreational market in Minnesota is making progress. The [bill cleared the House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee](#) last week and has been referred to the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee, with a hearing slated for Thursday. On the Senate side, the bill has been referred to the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee, but no hearing has been scheduled.

SIN CITY GETS FIRST HOTEL CATERING TO WEED CONSUMERS

— Las Vegas is poised to get its first "cannabis friendly" hotel. The Lexi, which will be located near the Vegas Strip, is [slated to open this spring](#). The 64-unit hotel promises state-of-the-art air-filtration systems in each room. Hotels typically don't permit weed smoking on their premises, creating challenges for tourists looking to take advantage of Sin City's recreational cannabis market. Nevada's first consumption lounges are poised to begin operations soon, after state regulators [issued 40 licenses](#) at the end of November.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Laura Goodson was [appointed acting director](#) of Mississippi's **Medical Cannabis Program**, where she previously served as an attorney. Goodson takes over for **Kris Jones Adcock**, who was promoted to be the Department of Health's assistant senior deputy.

Oliver Kruze was appointed CEO of **T.O. Global**, the U.S. affiliate of Israeli cannabis company **Tikun Olam**. Kruze previously served as the company's vice president of strategy and finance.

Schwazze made some changes to its executive team. **Todd Williams** was appointed EVP, M&A and real estate. **Steve Pear** is the new president of the wholesale division. **Ken Diehl** will take over Pear's previous role as president of the New Mexico division.

POT-POURRI

— **Layoffs and cost-cutting measures in the cannabis industry** [are expected to continue in 2023](#).

— **Ohioans are asking state regulators to add autism to the medical marijuana program**, [as lawmakers consider legislation to do the same](#).

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