



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 17-6208, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING TO PRESENT AN ADVISORY PUBLIC QUESTION VIA A COUNTYWIDE REFERENDUM TO COOK COUNTY VOTERS ON WHETHER THE STATE OF ILLINOIS SHOULD LEGALIZE, REGULATE AND TAX RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA USE FOR ADULTS 21 AND OVER

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the Illinois Election Code, 10 ILCS 5/28-1, et seq., and the Counties Code, 55 ILCS 5/5-1005.5, the corporate authorities of a county have the authority to submit a public question to the electors of the county by means of a referendum; and

WHEREAS, despite spending more than \$1 Trillion over the last 40 years, the efforts of the “War on Drugs”, the health and social costs of drugs increase every year, drugs are no less available than before, and treatment is not available to the vast majority of people who need it; and

WHEREAS, existing evidence from other states and countries show there is no indication that decriminalization or legalization of marijuana leads to a measurable increase in its use; and

WHEREAS, eight states and Washington D.C. have already legalized the recreational use of marijuana; and

WHEREAS, marijuana-related arrests in every Cook County municipality, including Chicago, result in staggering costs to Cook County government by virtue of the necessary involvement of the County jail, Sheriff’s department, State’s Attorney, Clerk of the Court, judiciary, and often times, the Public Defender, annually costing Cook County taxpayers tens of millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, most arrests for marijuana possession do not lead to trials or prison terms. Instead, a large number of these arrests are plea-bargained, continued without a finding, dismissed, or otherwise handled in a manner that places unnecessary burdens on already-limited criminal justice system resources; and

WHEREAS, as Illinois and Cook County continually face severe budget and financial constraints and lawmakers repeatedly face the undesirable choice of deciding between increasing taxes or substantial service cuts, or both, creating an intelligent, practical framework of cannabis legalization, regulation and taxation can help address a myriad of problems such as improved health and public safety, reduced criminal justice and jail costs, law enforcement efficacy, black market drug displacement as well as increased revenue for education and treatment protocols; and

WHEREAS, legalizing, regulating and taxing recreational marijuana use for adults 21 and over and would have an estimated revenue impact of \$350 to \$699 million at the state level and would also have a positive multi-million dollar impact for Cook County via sales tax proceeds and other public and private revenue streams; and

WHEREAS, a recent 2017 Gallup poll has shown that 64% of Americans are in favor of legalizing marijuana; and

WHEREAS, a recent 2017 poll conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute finds that two-thirds of Illinois voters, support or strongly support legalization of recreational marijuana if it is taxed and regulated like alcohol, and in Chicago, 74 percent of voters support or strongly support legalization of marijuana while in suburban Cook and the collar counties support or strong support is at 70 percent; and

WHEREAS, 55 ILCS 5/5-1005.5 states, “By a vote of the majority of the members of the county board, the board may authorize an advisory question of public policy to be placed on the ballot at the next regularly scheduled election in the county.”; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Board of Commissioners seeks to place an advisory public question before the electorate via a referendum on the March 20, 2018, countywide ballot seeking to ask Cook County residents if they are in favor of legalizing, regulating and taxing recreational marijuana use for adults 21 and over in Illinois, as follows:

“Shall the State of Illinois legalize the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, testing, and sale of marijuana and marijuana products for recreational use by adults 21 and older subject to state regulation, taxation and local ordinance?”

Yes

No

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Cook County Board of Commissioners that this Board present the aforementioned question to the electorate via a countywide advisory referendum on the March 20, 2018 ballot;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cook County Clerk shall certify the public question referenced herein and notifies the Secretary of State, and the Attorney General of this request for action in accordance with Article 28 of the Election Code.

Effective Date. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.