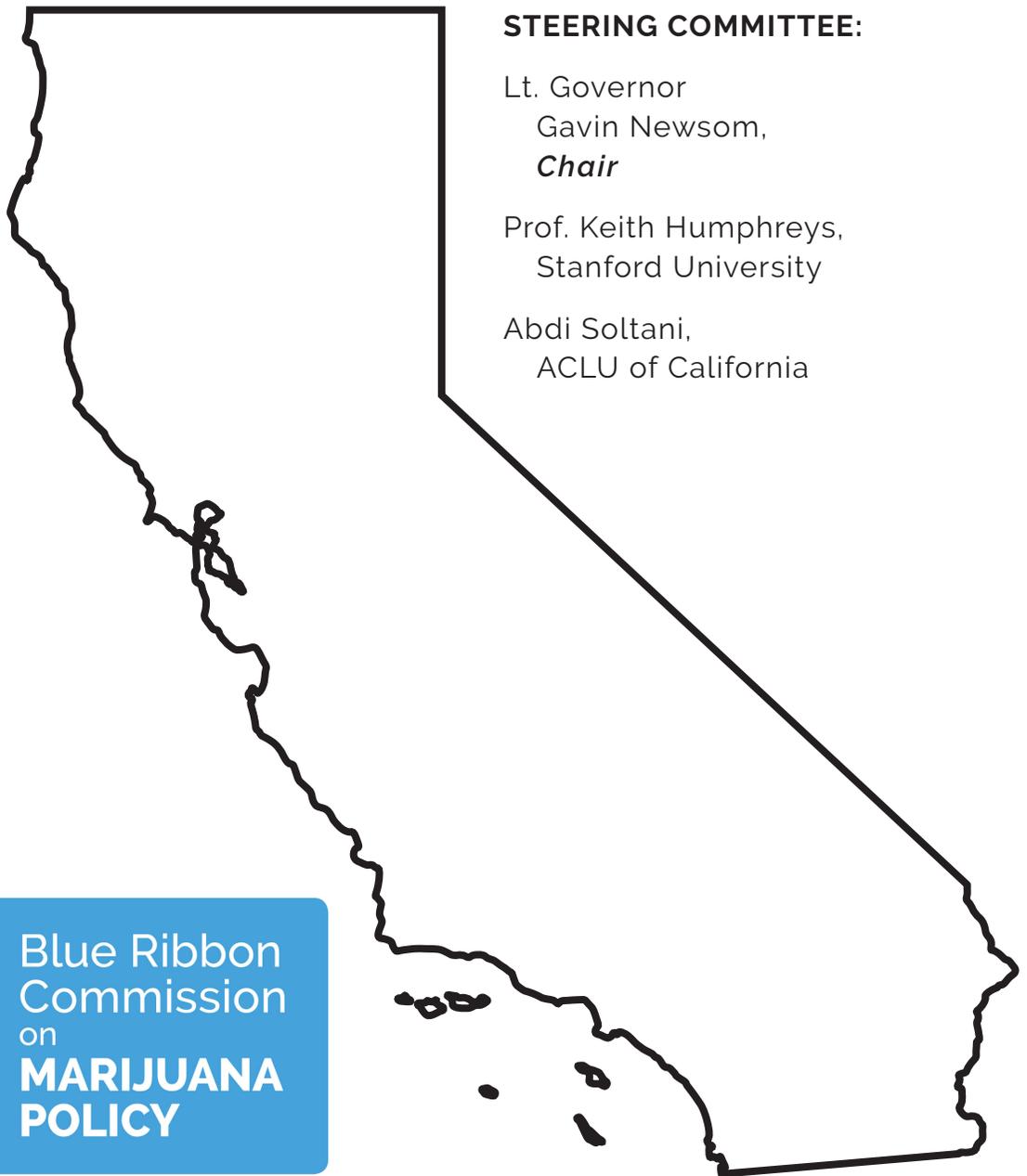


PROGRESS REPORT

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON MARIJUANA POLICY



STEERING COMMITTEE:

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Gavin Newsom,
Chair

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PROGRESS REPORT

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON MARIJUANA POLICY

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As the Steering Committee of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Marijuana Policy (BRC), we are pleased to share this Progress Report on the work of the Commission.

The goal of the BRC is to provide expert research and analysis to help the public and policymakers understand the range of policy issues and options to consider when drafting proposals to legalize, tax, and regulate marijuana. This Progress Report outlines some of the major issues the BRC has been discussing and studying.

The release of this Progress Report also marks the launch of the public phase of the BRC. We aim to engage stakeholders, policymakers and the public in a dialogue around the issues raised in this report. Over the months of April, May, and June, we will:

- Release additional policy briefs and papers on these topics
- Host three public forums on issues outlined in this Progress Report
- Invite feedback from the public and policymakers on these issues

Please visit the BRC's newly launched website at www.safeandsmartpolicy.org to see a list of Commission members, submit comments, or to stay updated on further releases and developments.

We are grateful to all the members of the BRC as well as the outside experts who have lent their time to this process. We look forward to the public dialogue over the coming months.



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Introduction

In October 2013, Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom announced the formation of the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Marijuana Policy. Over the past 18 months, members of the Commission have been discussing, researching, and analyzing the myriad policy issues facing California as it considers legalizing, taxing, and regulating marijuana.

The BRC serves as a resource to policymakers and the public on policy questions related to the legalization, taxation, and regulation of marijuana. However, the BRC is not a policy-setting or advocacy body. From the current period before such initiatives are drafted through to the regulatory period after a ballot measure, the BRC serves as a resource to interested parties seeking careful analysis.

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California voters can likely anticipate a ballot measure in 2016 to tax, regulate, and legalize marijuana for adult consumption. A number of issues need to be considered thoroughly when crafting such a measure. And even then, if voters approve such a law, a number of issues would undoubtedly need to be resolved through additional legislation and regulations under the jurisdiction of specified agencies with public notice and comment.

This Progress Report highlights some of the major issues and themes the BRC has studied. It should be noted that the BRC itself was not intended to make specific policy recommendations. Rather, the purpose of the BRC is to:

- Identify issues that need to be considered and addressed
- Illustrate options for how to address those issues
- Analyze the rationale and likely consequences of each of those policy options

In particular, the BRC acknowledges that marijuana is already accessible to many even though it is illegal beyond medical use under California law. Therefore the BRC recognizes that the health and safety of minors and adults are key areas for policymakers to consider and improve upon the existing legal and regulatory framework.

National Context

Over the last two decades, thirty-five states have enacted laws allowing some extent of medical marijuana use. More recently, several states and Washington D.C. have gone further, legalizing and regulating marijuana for adult use beyond medicine. However, virtually all marijuana use outside of federally sanctioned research trials remains illegal under federal law. This has created an interesting set of challenges both for the federal government and for the states that have taken steps to legalize marijuana.

While the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution provides that federal law trumps most contradictory state laws, fundamental tenets of our federalist system of government and specific provisions of the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA) grant the states considerable autonomy to create their own drug laws even if those state laws allow activities prohibited by federal law. The result is that state laws legalizing marijuana are valid, yet at the same time the federal government can enforce its own laws prohibiting marijuana use even within the states that have legalized it under their own law.

The Obama administration has implemented an enforcement compromise between competing federal and state laws: The Department of Justice (DoJ) announced in formal memoranda and policy statements that it will not seek to invalidate state marijuana laws by challenging them in federal court, and that it will not prioritize enforcement of the federal marijuana prohibition in states with robust regulatory systems that comply with eight “guidelines” intended to address federal concerns.

Department of Justice Guidelines

The Department of Justice policy statements are widely understood as allowing states to enact and enforce legalization systems so long as the state laws adequately address these guidelines with the goal of preventing:

1. Distribution of marijuana to minors;
2. Revenue from the sale of marijuana going to criminal enterprises;
3. Diversion of marijuana from states where it is legal under state law to other states;
4. State-authorized marijuana activity from being used as a cover for the trafficking of other illegal drugs or other illegal activity;
5. Violence and the use of firearms in the cultivation and distribution of marijuana;
6. Drugged driving and the exacerbation of other adverse public health consequences associated with marijuana use;
7. Growing of marijuana on public lands and the attendant public safety and environmental dangers; and
8. Possession or use of marijuana on federal property.

Congress in turn has gone one step further as it specifically relates to medical marijuana. In the 2015-2016 federal budget, Congress enacted a specific restriction on DoJ from using any federal funds to “prevent such States from implementing their own State laws that authorize the use, distribution, possession, or cultivation of medical marijuana.” Such a restriction would have to be specifically renewed next year.

Also, a bill recently introduced in the U.S. Senate would make such a change permanent, by making federal marijuana laws inapplicable to persons operating under a state medical marijuana law. The bill also seeks to remove marijuana from Schedule 1, the most restrictive classification reserved for drugs with no accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse, and placing it in Schedule II, which is the category that includes most drugs available by prescription.

While the federal government has said it will not challenge these state laws in federal court, recent lawsuits filed by other parties do. The neighboring states of Nebraska and Oklahoma have sued Colorado seeking to overturn its laws legalizing marijuana, alleging the federal CSA preempts states’ ability to make marijuana legal. Private individuals have filed two additional lawsuits seeking to invalidate Colorado’s marijuana legalization laws in federal court under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. The outcome of these cases remains uncertain.

Thirty-five states currently have laws legalizing medical marijuana to at least some extent, and, of these, four states (Colorado, Washington, Alaska, and Oregon) as well as the District of Columbia, have enacted laws to legalize adult non-medical use of marijuana.

Nonetheless, thirty-five states currently have laws legalizing medical marijuana to at least some extent, and, of these, four states (Colorado, Washington, Alaska, and Oregon) as well as the District of Columbia, have enacted laws to legalize adult non-medical use of marijuana. Colorado and Washington are already implementing robust systems regulating and taxing cultivation, distribution, and retail sale. All of which is to say that this area of law and policy remains very much in flux, and the next steps taken in California occur within this national context.

California Context

In California, voters enacted a system of medical marijuana through passage of Proposition 215 in 1996. Since that time, the federal government, state agencies, and local law enforcement agencies have enforced criminal penalties against medical marijuana users, growers, and dispensaries in California.

In 2010, California voters were presented with a ballot measure to tax and regulate marijuana, which did not pass. Since that time, the national conversation on marijuana policy has continued to evolve, with four states adopting legal recreational marijuana through voter initiative.

Most experts agree that California has among the least structured systems of rules and regulations of any state with a medical marijuana law, meaning that for at least some users, a quasi-legal recreational market has existed for some time. With California voters and policymakers likely to consider a ballot measure in 2016 on this issue, the BRC is considering the implications of explicitly expanding the legal use of marijuana beyond medical purposes.

To that effect, the Blue Ribbon Commission has taken on three major topics as the focus of its analysis. Assuming that recreational marijuana use becomes legal in California, the BRC is studying what would be the best policies to achieve three goals:

1. Protect the health and well-being of children and adolescents.
2. Preserve the public safety of Californians on the road and in their communities.
3. Create a fair, enforceable set of taxes and regulations that enhances California's economic and physical health.

Protecting Children and Youth

Marijuana use by youth is a central concern. Many marijuana policy issues relating to children and youth exist independently of whether marijuana is legal, taxed, and regulated for adult use. This is for the simple reason that marijuana is already accessible to many youth even though it is illegal. Some issues however are unique to how marijuana is regulated if made legal. Most proposals related to marijuana regulation legalize its use for adults age 21 and over, which will be the assumption for this discussion.

Marijuana Availability and Access in Legal Market

In some surveys, youth report that marijuana is more readily available and accessible than alcohol. Some analysts believe that creating a legal marijuana market that is carefully regulated will reduce youth access to marijuana, as long as the illicit market can be reduced. Others are concerned that legal marijuana is likely to be cheaper than it is now, and that legalizing marijuana could inadvertently send

the message that marijuana is safe. Many of the issues in this report – related to taxation, regulation, and public safety – need to be considered with the goal of limiting access to marijuana for youth. In addition, there will be a need to educate youth and adults about the health concerns of marijuana use.

Many of the issues in this report—related to taxation, regulation, and public safety—need to be considered with the goal of limiting access to marijuana for youth.

Responses and Interventions for Youth Consumption

If marijuana use is legalized, taxed, and regulated for adult consumption, then policymakers must consider what tools to use to limit access and consumption by children and youth. One approach is to use the existing system of infractions and sanctions for youth possession and consumption of marijuana. In this model, the current penalties would remain intact and youth who become involved with marijuana can receive infractions, be suspended from school, or even charged and prosecuted through the juvenile justice system for that behavior. Even if such an approach is maintained, consideration should be given to the disparities based on race and poverty through which these sanctions are enforced. Alternatively, policymakers could set aside those penalties for youth consumption and develop alternative responses such as education, counseling, and treatment. Consideration should be given to new approaches that seek to encourage at-risk youth to change behaviors, rather than punish those youth.

Role of Schools

Schools would also be a critical part of addressing issues with marijuana for children and adolescents. First and foremost, schools would need to have a set of responses for minors involved with marijuana – from those who have marijuana in their possession on school grounds, to those who attend school under the influence of marijuana, to those who sell marijuana to other youth. Depending on the severity of the behavior, and its impact on others, schools will need a variety of responses. Consideration should be given to health, treatment, and restorative justice practices, in addition to suspensions and expulsions, which might have unintended consequences.

Evidence-Based Prevention and Education

A wide variety of programs already exist to keep children and youth from using drugs, including alcohol and marijuana. Youth benefit from straightforward information they can trust, strong and positive relationships with their parents and other adults, and opportunities such as after-school programs.

Policymakers and voters can consider how to use some of the tax revenue from legalized and regulated marijuana to invest in education and prevention efforts aimed at youth. One further consideration is the degree to which resources should be used for programs that foster the general conditions in which youth stay on track and tend to avoid drugs, programs that broadly educate youth about the risks of drug use, and programs that focus on youth who are using marijuana, alcohol or other drugs heavily. Decisions should be based on evidence and evaluated for effectiveness.

Ensuring Public Safety

California voters and policymakers are rightly concerned about what public safety benefits or public safety risks should be considered among the myriad policy issues related to marijuana legalization, taxation, and regulation. Many of the issues related to public safety and marijuana are issues that need to be considered regardless of legalization, because marijuana is quite accessible both for medical use and in the illicit market. Other issues related to public safety arise if and only if California voters and policymakers choose to make marijuana legal for adult use.

Safety on the Roads

Our nation's unhappy experience with drunk driving frames conversations related to the legalization of marijuana, even though the pharmacology of the two substances is quite different. Whether a substance is legal or not, consumed for medical purposes or not, drivers are not allowed to operate a vehicle while impaired. That much is given and simple; the rest is more difficult.

Marijuana operates differently in the body, the brain, and the blood than alcohol.

Marijuana operates differently in the body, the brain, and the blood than alcohol. Whereas alcohol is water-soluble and can be traced in the breath and the blood only when it has recently been ingested and likely causing impairment, THC, the main psychoactive agent in marijuana, is fat-soluble and can remain in the body and blood for a long time, well after its effects have worn off. A strict system that penalizes drivers based on THC levels in the blood could have the unintended impact of penalizing drivers who are not impaired. On the other hand, a system based only on demonstrated behaviors of being under the influence could be more complex to enforce and arbitrary in its application.

Penalties for those Operating Outside Regulations

Currently, the only legal market for marijuana under state law is for medical purposes. Yet in California, marijuana is cultivated, processed, transported, and sold outside the medical marijuana system, for consumption both in California and undoubtedly outside California as well. Even under a legal, regulated marijuana market for non-medical purposes, there will likely be some actors who operate outside the regulatory system. These could vary according to scale – from small-scale personal consumption producers to large-scale producers who sell either within California or in other states in violation of those states' and federal laws.

Policymakers must consider whether to leave the current criminal penalties for marijuana cultivation and sales in place for those who operate outside the regulatory framework of a new, legal marketplace. Or policymakers could instead set those criminal penalties aside and create new regulatory enforcement mechanisms for those who do not comply with state laws and regulations.

Consideration of Prior Marijuana Convictions

One other major issue related to public safety is what to do in a new legal system of marijuana with those people who were previously convicted of a crime related to marijuana possession, cultivation, or sale.

California lawmakers made possession of a small amount of marijuana for personal consumption an infraction in 2010. There remain inmates serving sentences in county jails or state prison for marijuana-related offenses. A larger number of people living in California may have a misdemeanor or a felony on their record for offenses that relate to marijuana possession, cultivation or sales in the past.

Policymakers should consider whether in legalizing marijuana people currently serving sentences for marijuana-related crimes should have those sentences reduced, and whether others who have completed their sentences should have a way to clear their record. Of course, a range of offenses and individual circumstances should be considered; from those operating large-scale organizations involved in drug trafficking to those growing or consuming marijuana in a limited way.

Issues related to previous marijuana convictions also have a dimension related to racial disparities. Surveys consistently show people of color and whites consume marijuana equally, yet arrest rates and conviction rates have historically been much higher for people of color, particularly for African-Americans, with serious negative effects on their communities.

Issues related to previous marijuana convictions also have a dimension related to racial disparities.

Workforce and Environmental Safety

The current system of marijuana cultivation safeguards neither the workforce nor the environment. A legalized system of marijuana cultivation would need to address a set of employment and environmental issues.

A new set of rules and regulations would need to be in place for this workforce as it moves from the illicit market to a new legal market subject to agricultural labor law or general employment law, depending on the worker. Some argue that there should be barriers to enter this legal workforce for those with a previous criminal record, or marijuana or drug-related record, as a way to protect the integrity of the legal market. Others consider such barriers a factor that could drive some actors into the illicit market, and also as a factor that would exacerbate racial inequalities due to previous disproportionate arrest and conviction rates.

In addition to the employment issues, there are acute environmental concerns throughout the state, particularly in rural areas with large illegal grows on both private and public land. The impacts on water use, pesticides, runoff, and pollution have been well documented, posing a threat to wildlife, habitat, and human health. Choices related to taxes and regulations can encourage or discourage different environmental impacts. Indoor grows consume large amounts of electricity, while outdoor

grows use greater amounts of water. Rules related to these issues could be extended from current regulation of agriculture, or tailored specifically for marijuana cultivation.

Taxes and Regulations

Many of the major issues related to taxation and regulation of marijuana will be addressed in two phases: first, those issues specified in *legislation*, most likely by ballot measure and any subsequent legislation, to establish a legal system for adult recreational use; and second, those issues to be specified in *regulations* developed at both the state and local level. Policymakers will grapple with several tensions. For example, high taxes can maximize state revenues and discourage marijuana use by price-sensitive groups (e.g., teenagers), but can also enable the illicit market. Low taxes have the reverse strengths and weaknesses.

Level and Type of Taxation

Two of the major considerations for the state are the level and type of taxation on marijuana. To some analysts, a high rate of tax is appealing because it would contribute to a higher price for marijuana, which could reduce its availability and accessibility. Like higher taxes on cigarettes, a high tax on marijuana could result in reduced consumption. Also, a high tax can result in greater state and local revenue, increasing the revenue available to do the work of government.

Other analysts place a premium on a different goal: creating the smallest possible illicit market. They point out that a high tax can contribute to the continued operation of a large-scale illicit market. With a high tax, both sellers and buyers may opt out of the legal market in order to avoid paying the tax and continue to access marijuana through the illicit market. Consideration of these multiple policy options requires understanding what tax level the market can bear, and entails sophisticated economic and market analysis.

The optimal type of tax is also a subject of debate. At least three options are available:

- First, marijuana could be taxed “ad valorem,” as a percentage of retail price (e.g., 10%), which is akin to how many other products are taxed currently. But that method may not address the quantity or strength of the marijuana product being sold. In addition, marijuana’s price will surely fall under legalization, meaning that an ad valorem tax will decline in value, reducing the benefits to state coffers. And price-based taxes are vulnerable to manipulation by retailers, wholesalers and other taxpayers.
- Second, a weight-based tax (e.g., \$50/ounce), in contrast, yields more stable revenue, but may encourage the production of unusually high-potency products (i.e., sellers will want to get as much THC as possible into every ounce).

- Third, some have suggested that tax rates for certain products could depend on the degree of concentration of THC. Such a system would have the advantage of tying the tax to the strength, but would be more complex to administer. Others have pointed out that THC-based taxation invites gaming the system by manipulating reported THC content, precisely why no government imposes taxes on tobacco by tar and nicotine content.

Policymakers may have some tools to help achieve multiple goals. For example, tax rates could initially be set low to drive out the illicit market, and then gradually increased over time to boost revenue and reduce consumption. A higher tax rate could be set to trigger if the market price falls below a predetermined target. In addition, decisions related to the tax rate must also consider the enforcement level for those who operate outside the tax and regulatory system.

Use of Tax Revenue

Policymakers and voters will ultimately need to decide what to do with the revenue generated from taxing marijuana. Aside from political considerations, there are a number of policy choices related to whether the funds should go the general fund of state and local governments or be earmarked to address what some see as marijuana-related harms, for example through education and treatment. In Colorado, a portion of the tax revenue was designated to research the efficacy of marijuana for medical purposes.

When to Tax

Numerous points in the supply chain could be subject to taxation – from the initial point of cultivation through to the point of retail sale. Tax policy can also provide a number of incentives and disincentives for the cultivation, delivery, and sale of marijuana, which can be reinforced directly through regulation. For example, taxes could be used to encourage smaller scale production or to encourage lower-strength products as is done in alcohol policy. Decisions about when in the supply chain to tax marijuana can have dramatic regional implications, for example for rural counties that have a large number of producers as opposed to urban counties with large numbers of consumers.

Decisions about when in the supply chain to tax marijuana can have dramatic regional implications.

Scale of Operation

Policymakers must also consider the scale of operation in the cultivation and sale of marijuana that they would want laws or regulations to encourage or discourage. At the smallest scale, policymakers must consider whether growing marijuana for personal consumption should be allowed. If so, would non-commercial sharing of personally grown marijuana be legal? Going up one level, marijuana

growth and sales could operate at the level of a small business. And finally, marijuana could be cultivated and sold at a larger scale; this is the level of a large-scale corporation akin to the cultivation and sale of tobacco, for example. On this issue, there are many lessons derived from the regulation of alcohol and tobacco in particular that can inform policymakers' decisions. It is likely that the current illegal market has many operations at the full range of scale, from small to very large.

Keeping marijuana businesses small increases the cost of inspections (due to more numerous sites to be inspected), but also may yield smaller operations which can less easily marshal the resources necessary to overly influence the regulatory process. Allowing large corporate entities makes regulatory inspection easier, but raises risks of regulatory capture.

Vertical and Horizontal Integration

Requirements by policymakers could shape the marijuana industry chain, from cultivation to retail sales.

In the model of a vertically integrated market, the pipeline would be one straight line under the control of a producer from the field to the store. This would be like the apple farmer who can grow apples to sell at her own farm-stand as fresh apples, cider, and pies. The entire system consists of that one farmer, and the product does not pass through anyone else's hands. While the "leakage" of apples out of the closed supply chain may not be a concern as the product changed hands from farmer, to processor, to distributor, to reseller, etc., in the case of marijuana, reducing the leakage at those stages could be an important policy goal. Such a closed system, however, may pose economic challenges to growers and distributors, and thereby reduce competition, limit consumer choice and enable the illicit market.

A system can also discourage or prohibit vertical integration as is the case in alcohol regulation, which means some involved in this industry could be licensed to only grow marijuana, others would have the role of distribution and delivery, and yet other entities would be licensed to sell to consumers. This approach would be a way to reduce the undue influence of any single actor in the market.

Another issue is that of horizontal integration, meaning marijuana businesses could be stand-alone and permitted to only sell only marijuana products, or marijuana sales could be permitted in retail facilities that sell other products. Another issue is whether consumption could be allowed onsite.

Interaction with Marijuana as Medicine

Patients who currently individually or collectively cultivate their own marijuana with the recommendation of a doctor do not pay taxes for the marijuana they use, although those purchasing marijuana from a dispensary pay state and local sales taxes. This is further complicated by the fact that marijuana is currently recommended by a doctor and not technically prescribed like ordinary

prescription drugs, due to the federal prohibition and placement of marijuana in Schedule I of the CSA, rather than Schedule II, the category of drugs doctors are legally permitted to prescribe.

In a system where marijuana can also be accessed legally for personal consumption, it is a given that voters and policymakers would want to tax marijuana. One major policy question is whether those taxes would apply at the same level to patients who use marijuana for medical purposes. The advantage of doing so is that it would treat all legal marijuana the same, maximizing revenue and creating one regulatory framework. The drawback of applying the same level of tax is that it would increase the cost of marijuana for patients, especially for those with financial need. And because marijuana is not legal on the federal level, marijuana for medical purposes is not covered by health insurance.

At the same time, if medical use is exempted from taxes charged other users, people who are not sick should be discouraged from seeking medical access to marijuana for the purpose of avoiding paying taxes. Because the medical system evolved first in our state, there is a “one time” only challenge at the moment of a very large number of people being accustomed to recreational use at medical prices. California’s current medical system is among the least restrictive in terms of qualifying medical conditions. Some analysts have suggested that some individuals who are currently participating in the medical market need to be redirected to the new recreational system for it to work. Policymakers and voters will need to consider how to balance these concerns as they consider legalizing and taxing marijuana for use beyond medicine.

Degree of Statewide Uniformity

Policymakers must also consider the degree of statewide uniformity that they would want in a system of taxed, regulated, and legal marijuana. To the extent that policymakers allow counties or cities to opt out entirely of providing legal marijuana, the public would face a dramatic contrast with one location having legal marijuana and a neighboring jurisdiction that does not. People living, working, and travelling across these jurisdictions, say from one city to another city in a neighboring county, further complicate this situation.

The reverse situation would have policymakers adopt a statewide system with a single set of statewide rules that are uniformly applied, even if not uniformly enforced throughout the state.

Yet another approach is to provide a set of state parameters, with a floor and/or a ceiling of regulation, and require any local jurisdiction that adopts further regulations to operate within those parameters.

Still another issue is what to do with those counties that have already adopted detailed regulations related to medical marijuana. Should those local regulations be set aside to work within a new system, or could they be incorporated into a new set of policies? Here again, California’s lack of a statewide regulatory system for medical marijuana presents unique challenges.

Finally, if the law permits a county or city to ban marijuana sales, should a jurisdiction that adopts such a ban be able to be a free rider, receiving marijuana tax revenue, or would it have to forgo such revenue?

Regulations and Labeling Based on the Form of Marijuana

Yet another issue for regulators to consider is the form of marijuana that can be sold. A state system of testing and labeling of marijuana would likely be needed to provide consumers accurate information on the product being purchased, indicating the levels of THC and other cannabinoids. Basic consumer safety dictates that testing for contaminants like mold, pests, and harmful chemicals should also be conducted. Many consumers will also want to know how the product was grown in terms of pesticide and fertilizer use, an additional issue considering that the term “organic” is difficult to apply to marijuana cultivation due to the rules governing use of that term.

One topic of concern is when marijuana is sold in the form of edible products, and the risk of these products being ingested by people who did not intend to consume marijuana. Consideration should be given as to how edibles should be regulated and what safety standards should be in place to protect consumers, e.g. packaging, dosing, warning labels, THC strength, non-marijuana ingredients, etc.

Restrictions on Advertising

There are currently restrictions on the advertising of tobacco and certain forms of alcohol. There are further requirements related to the advertising of prescription drugs. At the same time, First Amendment protections do apply to advertising, including commercial advertising. Policymakers should consider what types of advertising are permitted and what types are not, and consider both public health and constitutional issues in determining those issues. This includes Internet advertising, which is increasingly becoming how tobacco and alcohol are marketed, particularly to young people. Policymakers might also consider limiting tax deductions for advertising expenses, as those deductions are not constitutionally protected.

Balance Between Law and Regulation

As with any area of policy, some issues should be decided through legislation, having some enduring quality in the law, while others should be subject to the regulatory process, which can respond and adjust over time according to how implementation is proceeding. Where legislation is enacted through ballot initiative, these issues become even more important given the difficulty of returning to the ballot to make changes to a state law.

As with any area of policy, some issues should be decided through legislation, having some enduring quality in the law, while others should be subject to the regulatory process, which can respond and adjust over time according to how implementation is proceeding.

The myriad issues involved in legalizing, taxing and regulating marijuana for adult use are complex. Fortunately, considerable research is available to the public and policymakers to make informed decisions about these issues. In addition, the experience of other jurisdictions, especially Washington and Colorado (and soon Oregon and Alaska), can help California policymakers make decisions with a greater level of information. If California is to take the step of legalizing, taxing, and regulating marijuana, a rigorous system of oversight and evaluation should be in place to monitor its implementation, including the impacts on the economy, revenue, health, safety and youth.

Next Steps: The Public Phase of the Blue Ribbon Commission

For the past year, the BRC has been holding meetings, reviewing research studies, and analyzing and discussing the myriad issues involved in marijuana policy. Comprised of some of the leading experts in the field, the BRC has benefited from the expertise and knowledge of its members and many outside stakeholders with whom it has engaged.

This paper provides a short progress report about the work of the Commission. It also marks the launch of the public phase of the Commission's work.

Beginning in April, the BRC will release several other products and organize other programs to help illuminate these and other issues in greater depth. These will include:

1. Policy Briefs: short summaries of issues related to specific questions of interest to policymakers and voters;
2. Policy Perspectives: interviews with experts or stakeholders in the field to further explore a specific topic;
3. Policy Papers: longer, more in-depth articles on key topics; and
4. Public Forums: at least three public events over the months of April, May, and June with a focused presentation and discussion of specific topics.

Feedback

The BRC welcomes feedback from policymakers, researchers and the public on the issues raised in this Progress Report, as well as on other issues related to the taxation, regulation and legalization of marijuana in California.

Specifically, we welcome feedback related to these questions:

1. Are there points raised in this report with which you disagree? If so, why? Please do share information, reports, or analysis that helps you form your view on that issue.
2. What particular solutions or approaches do you recommend policymakers pursue in the areas described in the Progress Report?
3. Are there particular topics raised in the Progress Report about which you would like to see the BRC provide further information and analysis?
4. Are there other issues that are not addressed in this Progress Report that you believe the BRC or policymakers should consider?

Please send comments via the feedback link on the BRC website at www.safeandmartpolicy.org. If you would like to also send any attachments, please send them as .pdf format documents via email to info@safeandmartpolicy.org. A member of the BRC or its staff or consultants will review every comment; however, we will not have the capacity to respond to each of the comments individually.



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