

## MARIJUANA

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nently inhabited U.S. territories, as well as the federal District of Columbia (D.C.). Eleven other states, Wisconsin included, have laws that limit the psychoactive compound tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the cannabinoid that delivers the euphoric effect of feeling ‘high’ – for the purpose of allowing access to products rich in cannabidiol (CBD), which has various medical applications for treating chronic pain, anxiety, inflammation and insomnia.

Research has found that the cannabis plant produces nearly 100 cannabinoids and about 300 non-cannabinoid chemicals. The two main cannabinoids are the euphoria-inducing delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and the pain-alleviating cannabidiol (CBD). The Rohrabacher-Farr amendment, passed in 2011, prohibits federal prosecution of individuals complying with state medical cannabis laws.

Four states have legalized the medical use of CBD with THC only: Georgia, Texas, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Alabama, Idaho, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Wyoming are the only states that have not legalized medical marijuana. In all other states, medical marijuana use is legal.

**Recreational marijuana usage**  
The recreational use of cannabis has been legalized in 23 states, three U.S. territories, and Washington, D.C. Another eight states have decriminalized its use. Commercial distribution has been legalized and is regulated in all jurisdictions where possession has been legalized, except for Virginia and D.C. Personal cultivation for recreational use is allowed in all these jurisdictions except for the states of

Washington and New Jersey.

According to trends, there will likely be other states adopting and regulating recreational marijuana use soon.

**As for Wisconsin?**  
Wisconsin is one of the few states in the Midwest – and the nation, for that matter – that has not yet legalized cannabis for either medical or recreational uses. With 40 states having medical marijuana programs and 23 providing full adult-usage under regulation, why hasn’t Wisconsin done one or the other?

“Wisconsin is,” in the words of State Senator Melissa Agard (D-Madison), “an island of prohibition.”

**Political misalignment**  
The reason why the Wisconsin legislature hasn’t crafted and passed either a medical or recreational marijuana bill is because the Republican controlled Senate and Assembly, both which have had Republican majorities since 2011, have avoided, delayed or obstructed such legislation.

To illustrate, Gov. Tony Evers’ 2023-25 biennial budget, which he signed into law on June 5, originally included a plan to legalize marijuana for individuals 21 or older. The governor’s proposed budget, essentially, incorporated a bill introduced by State Sen. Melissa Agard in both the senate and assembly that would have permitted responsible adult recreational marijuana usage. That portion of the budget was struck down by Republican legislators, even though the governor’s proposed plan would have generated an estimated \$166 million in marijuana taxation that could have been directed toward education, opioid addiction treatment, road repair and other programs to improve the quality of life for Wisconsinites.

Majority Leader and Speaker in the State Assembly Robin Vos (R-Racine) had previously

stated in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in January of this year that Republican lawmakers would abandon support for even medical marijuana if Evers’ budget proposal planned to legalize recreational cannabis.

“We are not Illinois. We are not California. We are not Colorado,” Vos told the Associated Press. “We are a state that’s at best purple. And purple is not legalization of recreational marijuana.”

Consequently, there is no marijuana legislation proposed or pending in the Wisconsin State Legislature in either the assembly or senate at this time.

**Bait and switch**  
Assembly Speaker Vos had also announced in January that Wisconsin Republicans were working on a plan to legalize medical cannabis after multiple legislative sessions without action on marijuana legalization, according to the Associated Press.

Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, who advocates “ending the senseless prohibition of marijuana” had cast doubt on the Republicans’ commitment to marijuana reform following Vos’ January announcement, at which time Vos had spoken with ‘forked tongue,’ offering a possible medical marijuana proposal but only if the governor didn’t forward a recreational proposal in his budget.

Agard told The Daily Cardinal, “The only time they seem to speak about this is when their backs are up against the wall, but actions are much louder than words and their actions are anemic.”

For proof, Agard said she’s advocated numerous times for various medical marijuana bills during her last 10 years in the Legislature, as well as recreational proposals. Although she’s introduced multiple bills, Agard said there has been no movement from Vos’ end.

**Public pressure**  
However, as public support for legalized marijuana continues to grow in Wisconsin, Senate Republicans are now suggesting there might be some room for compromise. Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) told the Journal Sentinel in January he would support a medical marijuana program for treating chronic pain. “They’re working on something, but working on something doesn’t mean they’re actually going to introduce it,”



State Senator Melissa Agard.

Photo courtesy Senator Agard

Agard emphasized. LeMahieu told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, “We don’t want people going in because their back hurts and getting medical marijuana. It needs to be cancer pain, you know – prescribed.”

The Reporter contacted State Senator Mary Felzkowski (R-Irma), who had once proposed a restrictive bill on medical marijuana in line with what LeMahieu and other GOP state legislators had earlier wanted. Felzkowski stated, “I look forward to re-introducing my medical marijuana bill this session, and working with anyone who is interested in coming to the table to make sure we can provide Wisconsinites who are in pain with the access to the relief they deserve.”

**What Wisconsinites “deserve” and what they want**

Despite what certain legislators believe certain Wisconsinites deserve because of pain issues, the great majority of residents want responsible recreational marijuana laws on the books, period.

In fact, cannabis legalization is wildly popular in Wisconsin, and Agard, among many others, believes it’s only a matter of time until both medical and recreational components are accounted for under Wisconsin law.

According to a Rock County survey in 2018 regarding the legalization of marijuana, almost 70% of the state supports approval of a statewide marijuana law for responsible adult use.

A 2022 Marquette Law School study found that 69% of Wisconsin registered voters and the majority of voters in every political party supported legalizing recreational weed. Supporters included 51% of Wisconsin Republicans, 53% of Wisconsinites over the age

of 60, and every racial, regional, income, and educational demographic in the survey. In 2019, the Marquette poll found 83% of Wisconsinites support marijuana for medical use.

Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) said, “People across the state of Wisconsin are far ahead of policymakers when it comes to this piece of legislation. It is time the people of Wisconsin hold their elected officials accountable and make sure that they are hearing the voices of their constituents.”

So, if most Wisconsin’s adult residents want access to marijuana, do they sit still or find a way to access it themselves, despite the lack of state laws permitting local availability?

**Revenue lost to bordering states**  
Wisconsin’s marijuana consumers travel to bordering states to purchase what they cannot purchase here.

With both Michigan and Illinois having legalized marijuana in recent years, Wisconsinites are purchasing cannabis regardless of state law. And with Minnesota’s recreational use bill going into effect on Aug. 1 this year, it’s expected Wisconsin’s residents will find a third state with border-side pick-up availability.

A study released last month from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau found Wisconsinites had spent \$121 million on cannabis sales in Illinois in 2022. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation estimates the state made \$36.1 million in tax revenue last year from Wisconsinites traveling across state lines to buy marijuana. This was confirmed by a memo from the nonpartisan Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

The analysis by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau reviewed cannabis tax revenue sales by Wisconsin residents by “assuming that all sales to out-of-state residents in counties bordering Wisconsin were made to Wisconsin residents, which are estimated to constitute 78% of total Illinois cannabis-related tax revenue.”

The same report said more than half the cannabis sales made in counties bordering Wisconsin were made by out-of-state residents.

**Republican recalcitrance**  
Even though Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota have legalized

marijuana for adult use and are reaping profits from Wisconsin consumers, our state remains an island of cannabis scarcity, and all political signs indicate that GOP lawmakers are farther away from finding any middle ground, even on medical marijuana legislation.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who for years gave lip-service to medical marijuana, told WISN during an interview earlier this year “we’re not that close” on medical.

Sen. Agard said those Republicans are out of touch with what most people want. She said, “It does not make us more safe, it does not help us move forward, and clearly does not match the values of the people who work and play in our state.”

She said a number of Republican colleagues have told her privately they would vote for the bill if she got it to the floor, but she added, “They’re hesitant to sign onto the bill and be the first person from their party to put their name on it, because there are concerns their leaders may take action against them.”

The intensity with which Vos states his case seems to confirm Agard’s inference. “If we’re going to do medical marijuana,” Vos stated, “it has nothing to do with generating taxes for the state and it has nothing to do with creating a new industry.” Vos said, “We do not need to become like Illinois or Michigan where anywhere you go, there’s the stench of marijuana.”

**Facing fiscal reality and future profitability**  
Regardless of GOP resistance, recalcitrance and ambiguity in the Wisconsin legislature. Democrats are moving forward.

Representative Sargent said, “This solution is not just about legalizing marijuana; it is about legalizing opportunity. Legalizing marijuana is about creating family sustaining jobs, increasing revenue and economic opportunity, while addressing massive racial disparities. The benefits are too great to ignore.”

Senator Agard informed The Reporter that she will, once again, introduce a responsible adult use marijuana bill into the legislature’s agenda during this current session.

“The genie’s out of the bottle,” Agard declared. “Wisconsinites will eventually get their collective wish fulfilled, even if it takes changing the guard in 2024.”

## LAKESIDE

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Bob Salov and Governor Evers. Photo submitted

review Act 12 (Assembly Bill 245) in its entirety at <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/12><https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/12>

Fire Chief Randall Pickering, a longstanding advocate of shared state revenue, had kept the board abreast of the revenue sharing plan as it wended its way through the legislature under AB 245; and, though away on vacation during July’s monthly meeting, he left information for Secretary (and Treasurer) Candy Davis to convey to commissioners.

“The chief,” Davis said, “will have the specific numbers on the possible amounts each of the eleven municipalities will get, and this includes our 10 members and the Town of Koshkonong that holds a contract with us.”

Given the complexity and

intricacies of Act 12, its applicability and apportionment to each of the 11 stakeholders, Pickering proposed a special meeting sometime in August to handle it all.

Also on the agenda, the July 2023 District Board Report was given by Deputy Chief of Operations, Brandon Whitmore, who stated, “Inter-facility transfers are holding steady.”

Statistically, there have been 291 IFTs in 2023, up from the 272 IFTs in 2022, with a 12-month rolling average of 48.4 inter-facility transfers a month.

Therefore, it was an important piece of news when Whitmore announced, “Our two new ambulances are in.”

Budgeted for, these ambulances arrived just in time, because old Ambulances 342 and 346 “are experiencing diesel engine issues and are out of service.”

Of note from the technical side, Davis gave an update on the nearly complete conversion from QuickBooks to Civic Systems Accounting Software, allowing financial operations, where data entry, statistical analysis, report compilation and related fiscal matters were to be expedited with greater accuracy, efficiency and pliancy.

Regarding staffing, Whitmore reported, “We continue at full staffing with 76, and all 52 of our EMT licenses have been renewed as of June.”

Lastly, with erstwhile bookkeeper Nancy Towns’ announced departure, her replacement was hired. Rebecca Anderson was introduced to the board during their meeting by Davis, having assumed her new duties June 8.

## TOBACCO

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The Tobacco Heritage Days events began Saturday with the 5k Rascal Run at Racetrack Park.

Other attention-getters among the loud screams of children at various venues in the park, was the traditional tobacco judging contest and talks about the history of Edgerton.

Former Edgerton High School History teacher Marc Papendieck traced the history of the city from the great glacial age to Indians building effigy mounds and harvesting rice in the Koshkonong region before European immigrants settled to build farm communities.

Sheldon Shield, 88, a longtime

tobacco farmer, described the hard work of growing tobacco that later identified Edgerton as Tobacco City.

At the Edgerton Arts and Clay tent, pottery worker Fred Maves guided young people and others in making pottery from the area’s yellow clay.

The venue aimed at recapturing some of Edgerton’s history as a pottery center in the late 1800s and early 1900s when six pottery works existed, the most prominent made popular by Pauline Jacobus, whose works were sold at Macy’s and Tiffany’s in Chicago and New York.

The parade Sunday featured a float sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and other floats calling attention to local businesses.

## Summit Players Theatre performing Macbeth across Wisconsin



Summit Players Theatre is returning to live outdoor performances.

Photo submitted

By A.J. Magoon  
Summit Players Theatre

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the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Summit Players are also able to introduce audiences around the state to their local parks. The group’s educational workshop, “Inside Shakespeare’s Story: Macbeth” is new this year and offered before every show. The workshop may help kids and parents alleviate concerns about Macbeth’s more serious or tragic aspects. It serves as a way for kids and “fun adults” to get comfortable with the play, Shakespeare’s language and the way nature played into his works. Participants take part in Shakespeare games and exercises culminating in performing a short scene.

This year, the Summit Players team boasts two new members – actor Matthew Torkilsen, who will also serve as a teaching artist for the company, as well as Tour Manager Natasha Goeller. “The workshop is a great way to learn about the play and how plays like this can still be exciting and interesting, even if they’re more serious,” said Caroline Norton, Education Director and six-year alumna of the company’s tours. “Plus, the workshop content changes and the play changes, which means that people who have seen our shows for years will



They will be holding workshops before each performance.

Photo submitted



MacBeth will be spooky, not scary.

Photo submitted

enjoy everything just as much as people who have never seen us before.”

Summit Players Theatre’s 2023 season is supported in part by grants from the Wisconsin Arts Board and Wisconsin Humanities, with funds from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

The Players’ eighth season will consist of the following performances:

July 21: **Lake Kegonsa State Park Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

July 22: **Mirror Lake State Forest Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

July 23: **Roche-a-Cri State Park Workshop:** 1:00 p.m. | Show: 2:30 p.m.

August 4: **Wildcat Mountain State Park Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

August 5: **Merrick State Park Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

August 6: **Perrot State Park Workshop:** 1:00 p.m. | Show: 2:30 p.m.

August 11: **Lake Wissota State Park Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

August 12: **Interstate State Park Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

August 18: **Kettle Moraine State Forest – Pike Lake Unit Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.

August 19: **Havenwoods State Forest Workshop:** 5:30 p.m. | Show: 7:00 p.m.