

The DEA Is (Maybe) Starting To Move Forward On Offering Better Marijuana For Research



The DEA has accepted applications for three years from cultivators who want to grow weed for research – now they say they’re moving forward with them.

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It’s not a definite time frame, but the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) finally announced in late August that they are “moving forward to facilitate and expand scientific and medical research for marijuana in the United States.”

Sounds good. But what does that mean, exactly?

According to a news release from the agency, it means the DEA is officially processing new applications from growers who want to supply cannabis for medical research. The announcement led marijuana researchers to hope that they are “one step closer to expanding their limited supply of the plant,” according to NPR.

However, some are not so sure. After all, the DEA has been taking applications from growers for three years. And the news release contains no timeline for reaching a decision on the applications. Furthermore, it announces the DEA’s intention to create new rules for cultivators that will involve public hearings, so there are still some outstanding questions left to be answered.

In a blog on the press release, NORML Executive Director Erik Altieri wrote that he believes the DEA will continue “foot-dragging” on the issue. “This is not the first time the agency has made such a promise,” he wrote.

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Why Is Allowing More Farms To Grow Research Marijuana Important?

Right now, the only place where cannabis can be grown for federally approved research is the University of Mississippi, as the university has had the contract to provide research marijuana for 50 years.

That’s great for the University of Mississippi, but not so great for everyone else. Researchers have criticized the quality of the Mississippi marijuana. One study found that the weed has more genetically in common with hemp than it does with cannabis. People can walk into a dispensary anywhere and get more powerful weed.

The situation is so bad that an Arizona researcher **sued the**

DEA this summer to speed up the application process because the current research marijuana is “sub-par.”

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The DEA Has Been Taking Its Time

The DEA announced in 2016 that it would accept applications from new marijuana cultivators.

Three years later, more than 30 organizations have applied; but the DEA has taken no action.

While the news release indicates that the DEA is moving forward, it also contains information that indicates there might be even longer delays. Before making any decisions on the applications, the DEA “intends to propose new regulations that will govern the marijuana growers program for scientific and medical research,” according to the release.

While no details are provided, the release stated that the new rules will ensure the DEA can “evaluate the applications under the applicable legal standard and conform the program to relevant laws.”

The release also notes that they will create a process allowing for public comments on the new regulations, another factor that could add quite a bit of time. The DEA does not provide a time frame for that process, or for when the applications will be approved.

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