

## **Like a Steam Locomotive, Rolling Down the Track: Biden Signs Marijuana Research Bill**

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For decades, the federal government only allowed scientists to research marijuana grown on the campus of the University of Mississippi. While Mississippi-grown cannabis will continue to be the subject of federally sanctioned research, the Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research Expansion Act, which President Biden signed into law on December 2, 2022, will significantly expand the ability of research applicants to legally obtain cannabis and study its medicinal, therapeutic, and other impacts on users. The legislation is historic, constituting the nation's first-ever piece of independent cannabis reform legislation. Several federal agencies will be involved with the research program created by the bill. The DEA will oversee the process through which researchers seek approval to study the plant and its byproducts and through which growers or manufacturers of marijuana-derived drugs seek approval to provide the researched products.

The law encourages the FDA to create medicines produced by cannabis by letting approved medical and osteopathic schools, practitioners, research institutions, and manufacturers with the necessary registrations cultivate their own cannabis to research. And the Department of Health and Human Services will be required to evaluate the health benefits and risks of cannabis, as well as to assess ways to open up the channels to research cannabis grown in state legal programs. The law also expressly condones a state-licensed physician to discuss how marijuana might help treat patients and the potential risks of such treatment. This latter provision arguably signifies an official pseudo adoption by Congress and the administration of state-legal medical cannabis programs.

Other takeaways abound, but there is no denying that this research bill is yet another step by the federal government towards meaningful cannabis reform.

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