

Analysis: Legislative inaction on medical marijuana leaves some voters with tough choice

By Bobby Harrison
Mississippi Today
Approval of medical marijuana on Nov. 3 by Mississippi voters, based at least on polling, seems like a lead-pipe cinch.



A poll conducted by Millsaps College and Mississippi-based Chism Strategies in 2019 placed support for legalizing medical marijuana at 67% to 27%. In today's



Pay that thing off!
Dear Dave,
My only debt right now is a car payment. I still owe \$12,000 on the vehicle, and currently I have \$25,000 in savings. I'm in a very stable line of work, but my income can vary somewhat from month to month. Should I hang on to my savings, or pay off the car?

Erik
Dear Erik,
Debt is a bad thing to have in your life, especially when your income can vary from paycheck to paycheck. You're in good shape, except for the car note, though. It's like a ball and chain around your neck.
You'd still have \$13,000 left if you paid off the car. And with the money you'd free up, you could rebuild your savings in no time. Pay off the car, dude!

—Dave
**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 16 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

polarized society, it's difficult to find that level of support for many issues.
Yet some voters, who support the use of marijuana for medical purposes, might have second thoughts on approving the issue at the ballot box.
There will be two medical marijuana proposals on the ballot this November: a citizen-sponsored initiative, and an alternative approved by legislators.
Legislators placed the alternative on the ballot because they argued the citizen-sponsored initiative is too lax, allowing easy access to marijuana. Others would argue the legislators' proposal is too restrictive and is being placed on the ballot just to confuse voters and



September 10 - Cleo Riley, Logan Ledbetter, Tommy Haffey, Sue Ellen Stubbs, Brittany Tate Lanford, Ralph Alexander, Helene Johnson, Dennis McGrew, Christian Gardner, Addison Murphy
September 11 - Angie Martin, Kate Riley, Elmer Keith, Luann Adams, Calvin Landfair, Wyatt Gilmore, Terry Moore, Sammy Niven, Sarah Hardy
September 12 - Adrienne Bryant, Shirley Ables, Gail Langford, Eloise Alderman, Angie Clark, Marquesha Redmond, Myles Smith
September 13 - Nathan Taylor, Trace Regan, John Ginn, Michael Smith, Madyson Rosamond, Wayne Bugg, Bob Dickard, Shannon Davis, Tacaliya Clerk, McKinlee Fulgham, Trey Taylor, Darren Hanks, Jim Bevill
September 14 - Hollie James McLellan, Robert Ellison, Jordan Langford, Blake Bell, Morgan Loflin, Erin Jenkins, Darien Smith, Harlee Blackstock, Melanie Hardy, David Melton, Dre Stafford
September 15 - Kasey Hammett, Olymphia Horton, Connor Pritchard, Ellie Gilmer, Edie Gilmer, Cooper Loflin
September 16 - Ina Rigby, Mac Phillips, Maxine Hodges, Olivia O'Reilly, Kristin Smith, Cassey McBride, James Russell, Alvin Russell, Brian Killebrew, Rylee Sizemore, Mike Chandler, Beth Warrington, Diane Whiteside, Madden Bates, Betty Stroud Anderson, Grayson Burwell, Jase Richmond, Jim McCrory

guarantee the defeat of both.
Depending on a person's perspective, both of those arguments have merit. But there is another argument that upon first glance might be considered academic, but in reality creates real world consequences.
If either of the proposals prevail on the Nov. 3 ballot, medical marijuana will be incorporated into the Mississippi Constitution. Never mind the legitimate argument that the Constitution should address major issues, such as our rights and freedoms, and instead focus on the fact that once something gets in the Constitution it is difficult to change or remove.
The only two ways to amend the Mississippi Constitution are by completing the difficult task of gathering the roughly 100,000 signatures of registered voters to place an initiative on the ballot, or by the Legislature ap-

proving a proposal by a two-thirds vote of both chambers and then that proposal being approved by voters.
Regardless of a person's views on medical marijuana, science or other factors might result in a need to make changes related to the issue years from now to make it more or less accessible. If it is enshrined in the Constitution, it would be much more difficult to make those changes.
That is why, in part, that other drugs are not addressed in the Constitution. They are incorporated into general laws that can be changed through simple majority votes of both legislative chambers and by the governor's signature.
Since June 30, there has been a proposal pending before the Mississippi Senate to pass a general bill to legalize medical marijuana. Because of the late date at which the proposal was introduced, it would take a two-thirds vote of both chambers to pass the proposal.
But if passed, it would be in general law just like other drugs, and like alcohol and tobacco products. Changes

could be made to the general law much easier than changes can be made to the Constitution.
Senate Pro Tem Dean Kirby, R-Pearl, who chairs the Rules Committee where the legislation originated, said he has opted not to bring it up for a vote because a consensus has not been developed on whether it could pass.
While the Legislature can reconvene between now and Oct. 5, Kirby said, "I don't think it is going to come up, but things change up here. I don't know for sure, but at this point if I was betting, I would say it will not come up."
The thought when the legislation was filed is that if a bill was passed to approve medical marijuana in general law, there would be less of a chance voters would approve one of the constitutional proposals on the Nov. 3 ballot.
Kirby said having the resolution pending before the Senate could be seen as giving voters confidence that if one of those proposals is not approved, there is a strong chance it will be taken up by the Legislature in the 2021

session.
Another perhaps more realistic view is if medical marijuana is rejected at the ballot box this November, legislators could likely be hesitant to come back behind the voters to approve such a proposal.
Democratic Rep. Robert Johnson of Natchez, the House minority leader, said he understands the arguments against placing marijuana in the Constitution and agrees with them, but to him those arguments are still not persuadable.
He said he supports the decriminalization of marijuana because "it has provided a vehicle for people to be locked up more than they should be," and approving medical marijuana is "a first step."
The Legislature has had years to act on legalizing medical marijuana as support has grown, "and we didn't, so this is where we find ourselves," Johnson said.
In effect, the choice is placing medical marijuana in the Constitution, or it very likely not being approved for years to come.
That choice could be a tough one for many voters.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- 1) "Silence!"
- 5) Santa in California?
- 10) Part of a nucleus
- 13) Bismarck's first name
- 14) Boring tool
- 15) Hen home
- 16) Daydreamer's state
- 19) Vessel with a spigot
- 20) Lobster companion
- 21) Come next
- 22) Core group?
- 24) Rock tour info
- 25) Crystal-ball gazer
- 26) It may be wood-burning
- 28) Bear with a big chair
- 30) Apart from any others
- 31) Biological blueprint
- 34) Try to see things the other way?
- 38) Filming locale
- 39) Santa Fe brick
- 40) Leaders of the pack
- 41) Finger-choosing call
- 42) Hack's due
- 44) Hacks' vehicles
- 46) Predatory critter
- 49) Make the transition
- 50) Maker of big bucks
- 52) One-many link
- 53) Make no detours
- 56) Get the pot started
- 57) Usher's walkway
- 58) Tuna another way?
- 59) Impart a new color
- 60) Ten-speed alternative
- 61) Shameless joy

HAT RACKS

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12
13					14						15		
16					17					18			
19					20					21			
22			23						24				
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49						50	51				52		
53					54					55			
56					57					58			
59					60					61			

By Mary Jersey

DOWN

- 1) Mundane
- 2) Many wombs
- 3) Holds to one's decision
- 4) Brick carrier
- 5) Slow gallop
- 6) Troubadour's instruments
- 7) Turkish title of honor (Var.)
- 8) Smell and then some
- 9) A jump shot forms one
- 10) Wake from sleep
- 11) Knotty situation
- 12) Part of a church
- 15) Short narrative or tale
- 17) Man or Ely
- 18) Rake take
- 23) Campus big wheel
- 24) "Finished!"
- 26) Ones guilty of disorderly conduct?
- 27) Muscle condition
- 28) They go below signatures, for short
- 29) Stopped fasting
- 30) Shakespearean "shortly"
- 31) Dishonest
- 32) Aberdeen denial
- 33) Some feature jingles
- 35) Ray of The Kinks
- 36) Horace wrote many
- 37) Medical motto word
- 41) Give off
- 42) Like Dracula
- 43) Foot curve
- 44) Smaller than small
- 45) Playing marble
- 46) Lightweight fabric
- 47) Zero of the population
- 48) Rich cake
- 49) Edible herring
- 50) Vivacity
- 51) Coarse file
- 54) Scot's head-coverer
- 55) G.I.'s ID