

## Federal Decriminalization of Marijuana: House takes up MORE Act Next Week

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House Majority Leader, U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer, announced on August 31<sup>st</sup>, that the House will “take up” the MORE Act “to help restore justice to millions by decriminalizing marijuana and expunging records of nonviolent federal cannabis convictions” during the week of September 21<sup>st</sup>. See <https://www.majorityleader.gov/content/dear-colleague-update-september-floor-schedule>. The “MORE Act of 2019” formally the “Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act of 2019” (H.R. 3884) had 108 co-sponsors at last count including Florida Representatives Matt Gaetz, Theodore Deutch, Darren Soto, Alcee Hastings, Frederica Wilson, and Charlie Crist. An identical bill pending in the Senate, S2227, has only 7 co-sponsors.

If enacted as law in its current form, the MORE Act would apply retroactively and do much more than federally decriminalize marijuana and expunge certain criminal records. Most notably, it would create 5% tax on non-medical cannabis products manufactured in or imported into the United States and essentially treat marijuana, federally, as a tobacco product.

Taxes collected from cannabis products commerce would be dedicated to those “most adversely impacted by the War on Drugs” primarily through SBA loans available to those in cannabis industry businesses, job training and reentry services, literacy and mentoring programs, health education, and substance use treatment programs. The taxes would also provide for grants to States and localities that minimize barriers to cannabis licensing and employment for individuals most adversely impacted by the War on Drugs. Finally, prior arrests and convictions for marijuana offenses subsequent to May 1971 could no longer provide the basis for negative immigration treatment, denial of federal benefits or denial of security clearances.