

# [***Why President Biden Needs Weed In 2024***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69K9-V7Y1-DXVP-51XR-00000-00&context=1516831)

Forbes.com

November 7, 2023 Tuesday

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**Length:** 974 words

**Byline:** Will Yakowicz, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** A majority of Americans now support cannabis legalization and it could be the issue that convinces younger voters to support the oldest man ever to run for the White House.

**Body**

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Weed The People: Cannabis legalization is favored by a majority of Americans. If President Biden wants a second term, marijuana reform has bipartisan appeal

ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / AFP)

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**A majority of Americans now support cannabis legalization and it could be the issue that convinces younger voters to support the oldest man ever to run for the White House.**

With President JoeBiden trailing in most battleground statesand former President DonaldTrump peeling away young supporters, cannabis may be the issue that helps get out the vote in 2024.

Ben Larson, an executive board member of lobbying group National Cannabis Industry Association, puts it a little more, well, bluntly: Biden needs weed, says Larson, who is also the CEO of Vertosa, a San Francisco-based cannabis infusion company. He needs all the help he can get to appear younger and more in touch with the times.

And pro-pot Democrats agree. I ve been arguing this with anybody in the Biden Administration who will listen: [Cannabis reform] is key to his success, says Representative Earl Blumenauer, a Democrat from Oregon and the founding member of the bipartisan Congressional Cannabis Caucus. Frankly, it's also key for the successes of other progressives.

Blumenauer points to Pennsylvania Senator John Fetterman, who wouldn't be in the Senate if he hadn't been involved for a half-dozen years on cannabis legalization.

Nathan Daschle, a cannabis lobbyist and the son of former South Dakota Senator Tom Daschle, also believes now is the time for Biden to double-down on his support for marijuana law reform. I would struggle to come up with another issue that was as much of a slam dunk politically or policy-wise, he says

The majority of Americans currently support legalization, no matter their political leanings. Eighty-eight percent of U.S. adults believe that marijuana should be legal for medical purposes, according to the latest Pew Research Center polling, and 59% of adults think it should be legal for people 21 years and older. Only 10% say marijuana should remain illegal.

President Biden, of course, has a long history of supporting anti-drug legislation. In 1994, as a Senator from Delaware, he sponsored theViolent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which upped the ante in the war on drugs during a time when record violent crime-plagued America.

But Biden has recently softened his position when it comes to weed. While campaigning for the 2020 presidential election when more than two dozen states had legalized some form of marijuana, recreationally or medicinally Biden started talking about how important it is to decriminalize the world s most popular illegal drug.

Two years into his first term, in October 2022, right before the mid-term elections, Biden made what is considered themost significant pro-pot move by a U.S. president:He announced that he wouldpardon all U.S. citizens convicted of federal marijuana possessionand also asked the Department of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General to review expeditiously how marijuana is scheduled under federal law. (Cannabis is currently classified as a Schedule 1 drug, meaning it is deemed to have no accepted medical use, along with heroin and LSD.) In late August, HHS recommended that theDrug Enforcement Administration should recategorize marijuana as a Schedule IIIdrug, meaning it has a low to moderate potential for abuse. The DEA is expected to announce its decision this year.

Frank Luntz, the veteran political pollster, sees Biden s support for cannabis reform as a necessary political move as 2024 draws closer. Biden is clearly having serious trouble among first- and second-time voters, so he may see cannabis reform as a potential fix, says Luntz. But it won t change the fact that he is the oldest president ever and he s clearly showing his age.

For now, however, Luntz remains skeptical about just how much legalization will move the needle in the voting booth. Cannabis reform does have the potential to increase voter turnout among youngest voters, he explains. But it is certainly not a top 20 issue among the general electorate.

According to a poll conducted by Lake Research Partners in 2018, 44% of voters in swing districts say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate if he or she supported legalizing marijuana. (Twenty-six percent of those surveyed say they would be much more likely to vote for a pro-pot politician.)

Andrew Freedman, who served as the first cannabis czar in Colorado in 2014 when it became the first state to legalize recreational weed, says it s impossible to not see some ***politics*** in Biden s newfound support of pot.

I don't think the Biden Administration would move on cannabis policy at all if they didn't see it as a political win, says Freedman, now the executive director of the nonprofit Coalition for Cannabis Policy, Education and Regulation. Being a pro-cannabis politician is a net positive, says Freedman, citing to CPEAR s recent polling.

For example, during the 2020 Presidential Election in Arizona, 60% of residents approved a ballot measure legalizing recreational marijuana. Biden won the state by a hair 49.4% to Trump s 49%. My understanding is that weed dragged Biden over the finish line, says Justin Strekal, a marijuana legalization advocate who founded the cannabis-focused fundraising organization BOWL PAC.

But cannabis legislation was also on the ballot in Mississippi, Montana and South Dakota states where the marijuana measures passed and where Trump won handily. That outcome is a sign, says Daschle, that cannabis is up for grabs and any candidate running for president in 2024 can use it to their advantage. If I were on Biden's team, Daschle says, I would be worried that Trump might actually steal this issue.

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