



## Medical Marijuana groups submit signatures for November vote

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Supporters of legalizing medical marijuana in Missouri turned in signatures Friday for two ballot initiatives that would let voters decide the issue in November.

A third group has until Sunday to submit its own signatures.

Each initiative would allow patients with cancer, HIV, epilepsy and a variety of other conditions to access medical marijuana. The differences among the proposals largely stem from how marijuana would be regulated and taxed, and where those new tax dollars would go.

The latter question is especially significant, because legislative researchers estimated earlier this year that more than \$100 million worth of medical marijuana could be sold annually if it became legal.

New Approach Missouri, which submitted signatures to the secretary of state's office Friday morning, has a specific emphasis on veterans. Post-traumatic stress disorder is one of the conditions that would qualify for medical marijuana under its proposal, and a 4 percent sales tax would be funneled into a newly-created veterans fund to help cover health care costs.

“For veterans, it’s really a win-win proposition,” said Jack Cardetti, the group’s spokesman. The Department of Health and Senior Services would be in charge of licensing the marijuana.

Find the Cure, which turned in signatures Friday afternoon, would instead charge a 15 percent tax and create an independent research institute to both regulate marijuana in the state and research “currently incurable diseases.”

If any cures or treatments were developed with the institute’s help, and the breakthrough generated revenue, some of that money would be set aside to reimburse Missouri citizens for what they had paid in income taxes.

Both New Approach Missouri and Find the Cure propose amending the state constitution, a process that requires more than 160,000 signatures. Cardetti said he turned in more than twice that number. Marcus Leach, a spokesman for Find the Cure, said they had already paid for two audits to verify more than 300,000 signatures.

Signatures must be verified by the secretary of state's office and local election authorities before a question can go before voters, a process that can take months.

A third group, Missourians for Patient Care aims to instead re-write state law, a process that has a lower signature threshold. That initiative would distribute a 2 percent tax among several state agencies, with a specific focus on veterans.

The group's treasurer did not return requests for comment. A spokesman for the secretary of state's office said the group had not yet turned in signatures.

If all three measures made it to the ballot and were approved by voters, the differences between them would be resolved by the following formula: Constitutional amendments would trump state law, and whichever amendment received the most votes would overrule the other.

Missouri lawmakers have expressed reservations throughout the year about letting voters set the rules for the growing industry. A bill that would legalize medical marijuana for many patients passed the House Tuesday, but the Senate has only two weeks left to consider it.