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California's Immigrants Poised to Benefit from New Marijuana Reform

Voters Cast Their Support for Proposition 64, Legalizing the Recreational Use of Marijuana Across the State

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — This past election day, Californians cast their votes in favor of a proposition that will have surprisingly positive benefits for immigrants and their families – the legalization of marijuana. With 55.8% of voters in favor of Proposition 64, also known as the Adult Use of Marijuana Act, California joined Massachusetts and Nevada, bringing the number of states and the District of Columbia who've rejected marijuana prohibition to eight. Results are still pending in a very tight vote in Maine, which currently leans in favor of legalization by one percentage point.

Not only does this legalization of marijuana join ongoing efforts to push back against the damaging effects of the "[War on Drugs](#)," it also brings with it welcome implications for California's significant immigrant population. California is home to a quarter of the total foreign-born population in the U.S., over 10 million immigrants, and one out of every two children in California lives in a household headed by at least one foreign-born person.

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) recently [released a report](#) analyzing the immigration impact of California's Proposition 64 and its anticipated effect on the immigrant population in the state. As laws passed in the 1990s expanded the intersection of immigration and criminal law, many legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants found themselves facing excessively punitive and unforgiving penalties for a number of drug offenses including marijuana possession, from detention by immigration authorities for months or years and loss of current "green card" to deportation.

"Marijuana offenses should not be justification to separate a family, regardless of immigration status. Proposition 64 presents a timely and important opportunity to ensure that California's immigrants, their families and their communities stay intact," said **Angie Junck**, supervising attorney at the ILRC.

The report finds that, by decriminalizing marijuana offenses for people age 21 and older and reducing certain marijuana offenses to infractions for persons 18 to 20 years of age, Proposition 64 will decrease the number of Californian immigrants at risk of being deported due to a marijuana conviction, and will help a number of Californian immigrants avoid being barred from applying for future lawful status if and when eligible. Proposition 64 would also ensure access to humanitarian programs such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) does not remain out of reach to immigrants solely because of a marijuana offense.

On the heels of millions of family-separating deportations, we look forward to the implementation of Proposition 64 as a crucial way to keep immigrant families and communities together across the state of California.

To read the full report, visit: <https://www.ilrc.org/immigration-impact-analysis-adult-use-marijuana-act>

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About the Immigrant Legal Resource Center

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) is a national nonprofit that works with immigrants, community organizations, legal professionals, law enforcement, and policy makers to build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people. Through community education programs, legal training & technical assistance, and policy development & advocacy, the ILRC's mission is to protect and defend the fundamental rights of immigrant families and communities. www.ilrc.org