

PHILIP B. SCOTT
Governor



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

January 22, 2018

Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Legislators:

Today, with mixed emotions, I have signed H. 511.

As I said when I vetoed S. 22 in May, I personally believe that what adults do behind closed doors and on private property is their choice, so long as it does not negatively impact the health and safety of others, especially children. In this context, it is very important to understand what H. 511 does and does not do.

While this legislation eliminates penalties for adult (age 21 and up) possession of no more than one ounce, and cultivation of no more than two mature plants on their private property, marijuana remains a controlled substance in Vermont and its sale is prohibited. Also, consumption of marijuana in public places is prohibited. Consumption of marijuana by operators and passengers in a motor vehicle is prohibited. And schools, employers, municipalities and landlords are also empowered to adopt policies and ordinances further restricting the cultivation and use.

In addition, when we negotiated a compromise prior to the veto session in June, I insisted the legislation also include:

- Stronger criminal and civil penalties for selling to or enabling the consumption of marijuana by someone under 21;
- Criminal penalties for using marijuana in a motor vehicle with a child present;
- Criminal penalties for using or growing marijuana at facilities serving children.
- Clear legal liability of the consequences of making marijuana available to minors.
- Strict penalties for possession of marijuana by those convicted of felony sale of marijuana, selling a regulated drug to minors, or on school grounds;
- Stronger penalties and fines for open containers in a motor vehicle; and
- Marijuana in excess of the permitted limit remains contraband and subject to seizure and forfeiture.

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H. 511 included these additional protections.

My S.22 veto message also plainly expressed my reservations about a commercial system which depends on profit motive and market driven demand for its growth. I look forward to the Marijuana Advisory Commission addressing the need to develop comprehensive education, prevention and highway safety strategies. To be very direct: There must be comprehensive and convincing plans completed in these areas before I will begin to consider the wisdom of implementing a commercial “tax and regulate” system for an adult marijuana market. It is important for the General Assembly to know that – until we have a workable plan to address each of these concerns – I will veto any additional effort along these lines, which manages to reach my desk.

More importantly, as I noted in my State of the State address, I ask the General Assembly to now turn its efforts to addressing more significant issues faced by Vermonters in their daily lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Scott', with a long horizontal line extending to the right across the page.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/kp

c: The Honorable Mitzi Johnson, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Tim Ashe, President Pro Tempore
The Honorable David Zuckerman, Lt. Governor
The Honorable William MaGill, Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives
The Honorable John Bloomer, Secretary of the Vermont Senate