

Gov. Wolf, Lt. Gov, Pardons Board Provide Update on Pardons Process, Benefit to Those with Marijuana Convictions

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PRESS RELEASE

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf was joined by Lt. Governor John Fetterman and Pennsylvania Board of Pardons Secretary Brandon Flood today to clarify and elaborate on the pardons process as it could benefit those who have low-level marijuana convictions.

Gov. Wolf and Lt. Gov. Fetterman announced the final report of the Lt. Gov.'s statewide [adult-use recreational marijuana tour](#) and online feedback form last week. As part of that announcement, Lt. Gov. Fetterman advised that he would be asking the Board of Pardons to expedite applications for pardons from those with low-level marijuana convictions. Since that is projected to effect thousands of Pennsylvanians, clearing the way for access to jobs, housing, and education, Gov. Wolf felt it was prudent to expand upon that aspect of the announcement to provide more details.

“I want to emphasize that while we cut down on the red tape for pardons, these cases are not being rubber stamped,” Gov. Wolf said. “I read each recommended case individually and weigh the decision carefully. I factor in the effect a pardon will have on past victims and the likelihood to reoffend. But I also weigh the consequences of people continuing to carry a record when they have turned their lives around. By allowing more cases to be heard through the pardons process, we are treating people like individual human beings. It’s the right thing to do.”

Sec. Flood elaborated on the process, explaining that the BOP is reviewing current pardons applications to determine the number that meet the criteria of nonviolent, small-amount marijuana possession and/or possession of marijuana paraphernalia, and how the BOP would address these amidst its current review process. He also explained the need to expedite the process while legislative action is considered.

“While Pennsylvania could legalize the recreational use of marijuana sometime in the future, what continues to remain uncertain is the appetite of the General Assembly to provide retroactive relief to the countless Pennsylvanians who were subject to the direct and collateral consequences of marijuana-specific criminal convictions,” Sec. Flood said. “Therefore, our policy proposal should be viewed as an attempt to balance the scales of justice within the context of our nation’s ever-evolving drug policy.”

In both a Sept. 26 press release and at today’s press conference, Lt. Gov. Fetterman urged Pennsylvanians to apply for marijuana-related pardons.

“Anyone with a marijuana-related, nonviolent possession or paraphernalia charge is encouraged to apply for a pardon, for free, and have his or her application expedited,” Lt. Gov. Fetterman said. “Given the favorable sentiment to legalizing marijuana, there’s no reason records of this nature should continue to hinder people from living their most productive lives.”

The expedited pardons process comes amid an announcement earlier this year to waive the BOP fee to apply for a pardon as another means of making applying more accessible.

“These efforts to move more Pennsylvanians through the pardons process is part of a larger effort to do all that we can do to give people a fair second chance,” Gov. Wolf said.