



CONTACT: Jake Cox – 828-773-9191
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AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER RYAN QUARLES PLEDGES MEDICAL MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION IN FIRST YEAR AS GOVERNOR

FRANKFORT, KY – On Tuesday, February 28, 2023 Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles announced his plan to lay out an issue a week that will help benefit Kentuckians during his time as Governor.

His first plan, which he announced at a press conference in Frankfort, will be a pledge to legalize medical marijuana in his first year as Governor.

Commissioner Quarles details his plan in the following op-ed:

Quarles Pledges Medical Marijuana Legalization in First Year as Governor

In this race for Governor, trust a farmer to build a medical marijuana program that benefits patients and farmers, not big government

As your Agriculture Commissioner for the last seven years, I've overseen the growth of Kentucky's hemp licensing program into what is widely recognized as one of the best-designed and best-run hemp programs in the nation. Next to addressing food insecurity, it's one of the achievements of which I'm most proud. To be clear, I didn't do it all by myself. Kentucky's hemp program has been a team effort.

How did we do it? We did it by working closely with legislators, by building mutual trust with law enforcement officials across the Commonwealth, and by refusing to turn a blind eye when we observed bad actors. We didn't shy away from the tough enforcement calls. We did what the law required us to do every time. And we worked hard to earn the trust of the law enforcement partners and other stakeholders whose buy-in was crucial to making hemp succeed here in Kentucky. And as soon as the Biden Administration's FDA gets out of the way, the hemp comeback will begin.

As Governor, I'll be prepared to build on Kentucky's past successes. Now is the time to legalize medical marijuana in a way that works for all of Kentucky. And as a farmer, former legislator, and the sitting Agriculture Commissioner, I have the experience and know-how to help pass a responsible medical marijuana law into law in my first year as Governor.

Andy Beshear's executive orders are nothing more than temporary half-measures. They also create zero new opportunities for Kentucky's farmers and business leaders. The reason why he had to resort to ruling by executive fiat that left Kentucky small business owners out in the cold is that he's incapable of working with the legislature to get anything done.

Together we will get it done the right way. Here is my pledge to you: In my first year as Governor, I will legalize medical marijuana to help suffering patients in a responsible way.

Then I will get to work implementing the new law in a way that will meet three key commitments.

First, this is about a medical decision between a patient and a doctor. I will work to get government out of the way when it comes to how doctors best believe a patient needs to be treated.

Second, let's be farmer-focused by building a program using medical marijuana that will be grown by Kentucky's farm families. Instead of leaving Kentucky's farmers out in the cold like Andy Beshear is doing, my plan will ensure we place our farmers right at the heart of the program. Some Kentucky farmers who grow hemp today are well-positioned to grow medical marijuana tomorrow.

Third, let's build a program that is financially independent. Despite what Andy Beshear thinks, we should not tax our families who need medical help. I'll fight to make sure that as with all medications in Kentucky, medical marijuana is not treated as just another revenue source for bigger government. I believe that medicine should not be taxed.

And to be clear, this isn't just about medical marijuana. We know that CBD and other cannabinoids derived from hemp offer significant health and wellness benefits. It's past time for President Biden and the FDA to do their jobs and give us a path forward for cannabinoids like CBD.

As your Agriculture Commissioner, I've proven that I have the leadership skills and know-how to build a hemp program that our law enforcement professionals and people across the Commonwealth can depend on to do the right thing. As your next Governor, I'll get a medical marijuana bill enacted by the General Assembly in my first year in office. And then I'll get busy building a program that all of us can be proud of.

In this race for Governor, trust a farmer to build a medical marijuana program that benefits patients and farmers, not big government.

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