

Rolling Back Smokefree Protections: Expansion of Cannabis Smoking Lounges in California

Background

California voters legalized adult-use cannabis in 2016 by approving Proposition 64 on the ballot. This law protected smokefree air by including language specifying that “marijuana smoking is not allowed wherever tobacco smoking is not allowed.” California’s strong statewide smokefree air law prohibits smoking and vaping inside most workplaces and public places, and Prop 64 ensured that the state’s important smokefree public health protections are inclusive of marijuana smoking and vaping.

Prop 64 maintained local control by giving cities and counties the authority to decide if cannabis retailers are permitted in the jurisdiction, and if so, to decide whether those cannabis retailers may allow onsite use, which could include indoor cannabis smoking and/or vaping.

Since Prop 64 was enacted, the cannabis industry has grown in its financial and political influence, and bills were introduced almost each session to expand where marijuana smoking and vaping is allowed in order to facilitate and normalize use. In 2025, a new state law allows cannabis retailers with onsite use spaces to sell food, non-alcoholic beverages, and host ticketed events, which in practice means that jurisdictions can permit cannabis retailers to operate as cafes, restaurants, music venues, and other hospitality venues that may also permit indoor smoking and/or vaping. To learn more about this law, see [Frequently Asked Questions about California’s New Cannabis Law](#).

Onsite Consumption Lounge Policy Trends

From Prop 64’s legalization of cannabis retailers and smoking lounges, to the expanded hospitality venues permitted by AB1775, California’s cities and counties have taken a broad range of approaches to regulating cannabis use.

While some cities and counties have decided to not permit cannabis retailers to open in their jurisdictions at all, other jurisdictions have decided to permit cannabis retailers to open with a wide variety of policy approaches related to onsite use. These approaches include jurisdictions that allow retail sales but do not allow any onsite use, to allowing onsite use in ways other than smoking and vaping such as edibles, topicals, etc., to allowing smoking and/or vaping in onsite use lounges.

Status of local laws

ANR Foundation’s [U.S. Tobacco Control Laws Database®](#) is a rich source of policy data on tobacco prevention laws enacted at the state and local levels throughout the US. The database includes fields for California’s city and county laws to be analyzed to capture whether marijuana is included in or exempted from a jurisdiction’s smokefree air protections, including whether marijuana smoking and/or vaping is prohibited everywhere that smoking is prohibited and whether marijuana smoking and/or vaping is specifically permitted at cannabis retailers and special events. The cannabis policy environment is constantly evolving, so the current data may not include every jurisdiction. ANR Foundation will continue to monitor local policy activity and analyze laws.

Onsite cannabis consumption:

At least **37** California jurisdictions allow onsite consumption at cannabis retailers

Onsite cannabis consumption, including smoking and/or vaping:

Of those 37 jurisdictions, **27** allow the smoking and/or vaping of cannabis in a smoking lounge or similar type of onsite use space. One of those jurisdictions limits onsite use to vaping, but does not permit smoking. Another 7 jurisdictions permit onsite consumption, but do not specify if this includes smoking and/or vaping.

Jurisdictions whose onsite consumption allows smoking lounges include Arcata, Berkeley, Eureka, Oakland, San Francisco, and Sacramento.

Some jurisdictions have enacted policies that contain restrictions on the type of onsite use or the type of venue that may permit onsite use. For example, Berkeley enacted a 2014 law, prior to the legalization of adult-use marijuana, to allow vaping marijuana in medical dispensaries, but it did not allow smoking. In 2020, Berkeley expanded the exemption to allow smoking and vaping in cannabis retailers generally.

Two jurisdictions—Ukiah and unincorporated Mendocino County—require that onsite use only take place in outdoor areas such as a deck or patio.

Onsite cannabis consumption, including smoking and/or vaping, as well as hospitality components:

At least **4** California jurisdictions allow onsite use at cannabis retailers, including the smoking and/or vaping of cannabis, and also permit consumption lounges to sell food and/or host events, as allowed by AB1775.

Cannabis hospitality venues are currently open in the cities of Coachella, Cotati, National City, and West Hollywood.

Onsite Consumption Laws in California Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	County	Onsite use in retailer/smoking lounge	Notes
Adelanto	San Bernardino	Smoking lounge	
Alameda	Alameda	Onsite consumption permitted	
Arcata	Humboldt	Smoking lounge	
Berkeley	Alameda	Smoking lounge	
Calexico	Imperial	Smoking lounge	
Cathedral City	Riverside	Smoking lounge	Outdoor use, such as on a dispensary patio, is not allowed.
Clearlake	Lake	Onsite consumption permitted	
Cloverdale	Sonoma	Onsite consumption permitted	Smoking not allowed unless included as condition of approval.

Coachella	Riverside	Smoking lounge	Smoking lounges with food and/or events allowed, per AB1775, with a venue currently open.
Coalinga	Fresno	Smoking lounge	
Cotati	Sonoma	Smoking lounge	Smoking lounges with food and/or events allowed, per AB1775, with a venue currently open.
Desert Hot Springs	Riverside	Smoking lounge	
Emeryville	Alameda	Smoking lounge	
Eureka	Humboldt	Smoking lounge	
Hawthorne	Los Angeles	Onsite consumption permitted	
Humboldt County	Humboldt	Smoking lounge	
Imperial County	Imperial	Smoking lounge	
Isleton	Sacramento	Smoking lounge	Onsite consumption not allowed unless allowed by CUP; dispensary with smoking lounge is currently open.
Lemoore	Kings	Smoking lounge	
Lompoc	Santa Barbara	Smoking lounge	
Mendocino County	Mendocino	Onsite consumption allowed: outdoor areas only	
National City	San Diego	Smoking lounge	Smoking lounges with food and/or events allowed, per AB1775, with a venue currently open.
Needles	San Bernardino	Smoking lounge	
Oakland	Alameda	Smoking lounge	
Ojai	Ventura	Smoking lounge	
Palm Springs	Riverside	Smoking lounge	
Point Arena	Mendocino	Onsite consumption allowed: vaping only	
Port Hueneme	Ventura	Smoking lounge	
Sacramento	Sacramento	Smoking lounge	
San Francisco	San Francisco	Smoking lounge	
Santa Cruz County	Santa Cruz	Smoking lounge	
Santa Rosa	Sonoma	Onsite consumption permitted	Must comply with smokefree law.
Sebastopol	Sonoma	Onsite consumption permitted	Must comply with smokefree law.
South Lake Tahoe	El Dorado	Smoking lounge	
Ukiah	Mendocino	Onsite consumption allowed: outdoor areas only	
Weed	Siskiyou	Onsite consumption permitted	
West Hollywood	Los Angeles	Smoking lounge	Smoking lounges with food and/or events allowed, per AB1775, with a venue currently open.

Definitions:

Smoking lounge = Jurisdiction allows cannabis smoking and vaping inside cannabis retailers, typically described as a smoking lounge.

Onsite consumption permitted = Jurisdiction allows cannabis consumption inside a retailer, unless otherwise noted, but language is unclear if consumption includes smoking and/or vaping.

Local example: Oakland

Following the approval of Prop 64 on the 2016 statewide ballot, the Oakland City Council voted in 2017 to allow cannabis retailers to open in the city and to permit these retailers to have a consumption lounge. Thankfully, Oakland took a protective approach to maintaining smokefree spaces and the ordinance specifically prohibited smoking – defined to include vaping – in consumption lounges. In the following years, the City Council approved a number of laws related to cannabis retailers, including a 2023 ordinance that removed limits on the number of permits that may be issued for cannabis consumption events.

In 2024, discussions were underway about weakening the 2017 law to allow smoking inside consumption lounges, which was recommended by the city's Cannabis Regulatory Commission to the City Council.

In May 2025, the City Council approved an ordinance that allows the city to grant onsite consumption permits that allow for indoor smoking. The language includes a requirement that a smoking permit may only be granted for a separately enclosed and ventilated smoking room, which will not address concerns about worker health or drifting smoke because the science has long confirmed that smoking rooms and ventilation systems are not a solution for protecting health from secondhand smoke exposure. This decision was an unfortunate submission to the cannabis industry, which took a page right out of the tobacco industry's playbook from the 1990s, which they used to convince bars and restaurants to install expensive and ineffective smoking rooms instead of creating smokefree environments.

Oakland's decision to create an exemption to allow smoking inside cannabis consumption lounges will result in workers being exposed to secondhand smoke on the job, it may result in smoke drifting into adjacent businesses and residences depending of the location of the lounges, and it may also encourage additional lounges to open if retailers perceive this as a business opportunity.

Interestingly, Oakland's 2025 ordinance did not include language to allow the sale of food or hosting events, which is now permitted by AB1775. However, given the City Council's support for prioritizing cannabis industry opportunities and cannabis culture as a whole, it should be anticipated that the issue of expanding the exemption further will be pursued in the future, to allow cannabis lounges to sell food and host events, which would create the unfortunate opportunity for lounges to operate as hospitality venues and further erode public health protections and smokefree norms for Oakland workers and residents.

Local example: San Diego County

San Diego County began developing a cannabis retailer licensing program in 2021, including the potential for allowing onsite consumption lounges. In response, the San Diego County Tobacco Control Coalition formed a Tobacco and Marijuana Workgroup to focus on concerns about consumption lounges and secondhand smoke exposure. The workgroup's participants include agencies that receive tobacco

education and prevention funding, community-based organizations working on policy development, and partners working on marijuana education. In order to increase awareness and support for maintaining strong smokefree protections, the coalition workgroup created an educational packet for policymakers and community partners with information about secondhand cannabis smoke, youth cannabis use rates, cannabis impaired driving, and other public health concerns.

Additional activities designed to build capacity for maintaining smokefree protections included tobacco prevention advocacy partners holding educational meetings with members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and their staff, with key messages focusing on cannabis secondhand smoke health risks, maintaining the county's longstanding and effective smokefree workplace protections, and considering outdoor consumption spaces rather than having the default be to allow smoking and vaping indoors since that does not protect workers, support public health, or further health equity. An educational call was also held with the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), which was organizing cannabis employees, to highlight how smokefree policies are a health and safety issue, which aligns with the key union priority of protecting workers. ANRF staff presented to the San Diego County Marijuana Prevention Initiative about onsite consumption lounges and the risks to smokefree policies.

San Diego County has taken a thoughtful and proactive approach to educating and engaging community partners and policymakers with the goal of preventing cannabis rollbacks and maintaining smokefree protections. As of early 2026, the cannabis retailer regulatory requirements related to potential onsite use remain under development.

What's next?

Remember: just because there is a legal provision allowing communities to establish cannabis use lounges, communities can say no. While cannabis proponents will push for lounges and indoor smoking/vaping, it is not a requirement nor a foregone conclusion that communities allow these venues. California's cities and counties have the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to longstanding smokefree air laws and norms that protect the health of their valuable workforce, and not default to prioritizing cannabis business interests by rolling back smokefree protections to allow cannabis smoking and vaping indoors. For jurisdictions that want to allow onsite consumption at cannabis retailers, there is [guidance to help inform policy language](#) so that worker health and smokefree spaces are still prioritized. Educating policymakers and community partners about the health risks of cannabis secondhand smoke, the value of including cannabis in smokefree air protections, the health and economic risks of rolling back laws to allow indoor cannabis smoking and vaping, and what to expect from cannabis proponents can all help prepare communities to prevent rollback and maintain smokefree environments.

Resources:

Brush up on the latest facts: The regularly updated [Secondhand Marijuana Smoke Fact Sheet](#) provides easy to use highlights of research findings to educate coalitions and policymakers, and it's a convenient source of information to include in education, advocacy, and policy development materials.

Smoke is Smoke infographic: This new [infographic translates research](#) about how all types of smoked and vaped products, including cannabis, produce particulate matter and pose health risks into a valuable visual educational tool, which can be used to help policymakers, coalitions, and community members understand why indoor spaces should be free from all types of secondhand smoke.

Learn about California's latest cannabis law: Read ANR Foundation's [Frequently Asked Questions about California's New Cannabis Law](#) to learn more about the impacts of the January 2025 law that allows jurisdictions to sell food and host events at cannabis retailers.

Policy language wellness check: ANR Foundation developed a [cannabis onsite use guidance document](#) to help inform conversations among tobacco prevention coalitions and policymakers in communities that are choosing to allow onsite consumption spaces. The goals of these policy recommendations are to minimize exposure to secondhand cannabis smoke for workers and patrons of the consumption spaces, and to prevent the drifting of secondhand smoke into neighboring buildings, in order to maintain smokefree protections and norms.

Marijuana and Smokefree Air Office Hours: Join ANR Foundation's virtual monthly gatherings to discuss the challenging and evolving intersection of marijuana/cannabis and smokefree air policy. Office Hours is a welcoming and supportive space for tobacco prevention staff, smokefree advocates, and other partners to connect with colleagues around the country and discuss this complex issue. Join Office Hours to participate in conversations about policy trends and challenges; discuss developments at the local and state levels; share strategy and resources for messaging, educating policymakers, and countering cannabis industry interference; and hear from guest speakers about the latest scientific research and from advocates about the latest policy campaigns. [Register in advance at this Zoom link](#) to join Office Hours on the last Tuesday of each month from 10:30 – 11:30am Pacific.

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