

Is the Federal Government Manipulating Cannabis Acceptance?

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On June 19, 1865 after more than a 2 1/2 year delay, word finally reached Galveston Texas, that President Lincoln had declared an end to slavery. Slave owners there exploited the delay to continue a policy rejected by the federal government. In today's world of instantly disseminated information, it is hard to imagine how universal recognition of such an important social change could not permeate throughout. But more than 150 years ago, both knowledge and recognition of profound changes in our important national policies could be controlled and manipulated since dissemination of information was subject to the whims of the political power structure.

While certainly not morally equivalent of the abolition of slavery, the current disconnect between the national acceptance of modernized cannabis policies and the continuation of the failed federal policy of cannabis prohibition evidences a similar manipulation. Continuation of federal prohibition in the midst of the evident widespread acceptance of cannabis as medicine and for adult use, is an outdated artifact from a time of misinformation and attempts to suppress minority voting.

Today, the cannabis industry now openly and rightly advocates that it is vitally important to facilitate meaningful minority participation in cannabis business opportunities. There is near universal recognition that those groups and individuals who felt the brunt of cannabis prohibition, should be positioned to own, operate and profit from responsible cannabis business. While states have moved to create well-regulated and controlled cannabis businesses, the federal government has failed to act. In April 2021, the House of Representatives passed the Secure and Fair Enforcement "SAFE" Banking Act which would allow access to the federal banking system by the cannabis industry. However, no pathway forward appears to be on the Senate's horizon which obstructs the important social changes that modern cannabis policy can bring.

The marking of Juneteenth aptly described on Juneteenth.com, "commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement, and for planning the future." This year, we hope that our federal government acts to create the access to capital and banking that is needed so that the goals of modern cannabis policy can be realized.