# US Justice Department Proposes Reclassifying Marijuana as a Schedule III Controlled Substance



The Justice Department on Thursday proposed reclassifying marijuana from a Schedule I to a Schedule III controlled substance, representing a significant shift in U.S. drug policy. This proposal follows recommendations by the Health and Human Services Department and approval by Attorney General Merrick Garland. Schedule III includes substances like ketamine and certain anabolic steroids, indicating recognized medical uses and a lower potential for abuse than drugs currently listed under Schedule I, such as heroin and LSD.

The public will have a 60-day period to comment on the proposal once it is logged in the Federal Register. This proposal is designed to ease federal restrictions on cannabis, simplifying research and potentially reducing the tax burden on marijuana businesses, which can be as high as 70%.

President Joe Biden called the move “monumental,” emphasizing its role in addressing longstanding inequities in drug policy. Biden also referenced his previous actions, such as pardoning individuals convicted of simple marijuana possession and encouraging state governors to follow suit.

While this reclassification does not legalize marijuana for recreational use at the federal level, it aligns with the evolving state-level policies. Currently, 38 states have legalized medical marijuana, and 24 permit its recreational use. The reclassification process includes potential review by an administrative law judge and a final determination by the Justice Department.

Some critics contend that rescheduling marijuana is unnecessary and could have adverse effects, while others argue it should be treated similarly to alcohol. The DEA will ultimately decide based on public comment and administrative review.

The burgeoning marijuana industry, valued at nearly $30 billion, stands to benefit economically from this federal policy change, which some believe will bring drug policy more in line with modern scientific understanding and public opinion.