



# Denver decriminalizes 'magic mushrooms' in historic vote

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Voters in the Mile High City have decriminalized “magic mushrooms” by the slimmest of margins, making Denver the country’s first city to de-prioritize enforcement of the hallucinogen.

“WE WON!!!!” announced Decriminalize Denver after city elections officials released final preliminary results late Wednesday. The measure, 301, passed with 50.56% in favor to 49.44% opposed, a slim margin that is nevertheless outside the mandatory recount margin.

Supporters gathered more than 9,000 signatures to place the question before voters. Once the results are officially certified later this month, Denver police will be formally ordered to make enforcement of drug laws against mushroom users their lowest priority.

But opponents could pay for a recount if they want, potentially delaying implementation.



A vendor bags psilocybin mushrooms at a pop-up cannabis market in Los Angeles on Monday, May 6, 2019.

Richard Vogel, AP

The plan doesn’t permit the sale or purchase of the mushrooms, and establishes a task force to examine the impact of decriminalization over the next several years.

“It’s a signal to the rest of the country that at least here in Denver we are ready to start remove some of these substances off the controlled substances list,” said Kevin Matthews, 33, who organized the decriminalization campaign. “A lot of people who signed our petition said they are tired to see people going to jail over what they choose to put in their body.”

Denver District Attorney Beth McCann opposed the measure. According to her office, only 11 of more than 9,000 drug cases referred for possible prosecution between 2016 and 2018 involved psilocybin. Prosecutors filed charges of possession with intent to manufacture or distribute in three of those cases.

Advocates say the mushrooms, which contain the hallucinogen psilocybin, have been used for thousands of years and may provide an alternative treatment for opiate addiction and mental health troubles, as well as spiritual insight. Users report bright lights and colors and a sense of connection with something greater than themselves.

Psilocybin has been classified as a Schedule 1 controlled substance since 1970 by the federal government. That means it is considered a drug with high abuse potential and no “accepted” medical value. It also means that university research and possession of the drug are prohibited under federal law. Marijuana, which is already legal across Colorado, is also a Schedule 1 drug.

Rock groups such as the Grateful Dead and Allman Brothers Band frequently used images of mushrooms in their logos, T-shirts and other merchandise.

The initiative would not have allowed the mushrooms to be sold under Denver’s cannabis businesses. Colorado, along with Washington, became the first states to allow recreational marijuana for adults over the age of 21 in November 2012.

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