

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine: Proposed changes to Ohio's new marijuana legalization law won't contain 'surprises'

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—Gov. Mike DeWine said that he and legislative leaders met on Monday to discuss what changes to make to Issue 2, a recreational marijuana legalization law passed by voters last week.

DeWine, speaking with reporters at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, declined to say exactly what proposed changes he discussed with Ohio House Speaker Jason Stephens and Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman during a breakfast meeting. But he indicated that they didn't bring up any proposals that they previously didn't air in public after Issue 2's passage.

"I don't think there's any surprises out there," said DeWine, a Republican [who last week said](#) he wants to enact marijuana restrictions intended to prevent accidental ingestion, public use, driving while intoxicated and advertising. He also said he wants lawmakers to lift existing criminal penalties for marijuana possession to avoid public confusion.

Huffman, a Lima Republican, [has expressed interest](#) in raising the 10% sales tax on marijuana created by Issue 2, as well as lowering the maximum amount of THC that marijuana products can contain. Stephens, a Lawrence County Republican, has suggested lawmakers would divert some marijuana tax money toward county jail construction and law-enforcement training.

"I don't think any of the things that I have suggested that we do really flies in the face of the spirit of what people were voting for," DeWine said Monday. "I truly believe that most people went in (to voting booths) and the issue was, are we gonna have legal marijuana or we're not going to have legal marijuana? And the details – I'm not sure people got focused on it. I have to focus on it because we have to administer it. We have to make sure it actually does in fact work."

DeWine emphasized that any changes to state marijuana law need to be passed by Dec. 7, when parts of Issue 2 start taking effect.

“If we can do this before December 7, it just gives everybody better notice of what the rules are and how this thing will work out,” the governor said. “It’s just going to be a lot better for everybody.”

When Ohio Senate GOP spokesman John Fortney was asked what proposed changes to Issue 2 that Huffman raised during the meeting with DeWine, Fortney replied that he hadn’t heard. [Cleveland.com/The Plain Dealer](https://cleveland.com/The-Plain-Dealer) has reached out with the same question to a Stephens spokesman.

The proposal [approved by voters](#) legalizes recreational marijuana for adults age 21 and older. Because the ballot initiative was passed as an initiated statute -- a state law approved by voters -- state lawmakers can make changes or repeal the law in its entirety. Recreational marijuana sales are expected as soon as late 2024 [under the timeline outlined](#) in the law, but individuals can begin growing six plants in their homes or up to 12 plants per household starting Dec. 7.