



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **Riverside Residents Oppose Legalizing Marijuana Dispensaries, Poll Finds**

*Existing voter opposition to legalization increases when residents learn more about ballot measure*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – A majority of Riverside residents – as high as 67 percent – said they oppose legalizing marijuana dispensaries via a measure placed on the June 2 ballot by dispensary operators, according to a poll commissioned by the City of Riverside. Opposition to legalizing dispensaries grew as residents who were polled learned more about the measure.

When initially asked if they would vote for the measure, which would overturn the City’s 2013 ban on storefront and mobile dispensaries, 56 percent of voters polled responded negatively, including 46 percent of voters answering “definitely no,” according to the survey. Another 8 percent responded with “probably no” and 2 percent said they were undecided, but leaning toward voting no.

Opposition was even higher when those polled were told that allowing new dispensaries would not raise any additional taxes or fees for city services; that dispensaries would self-certify their hours of operation; that 10 dispensaries would be permitted and more could open as the city’s population increases; that medical marijuana would not be required to be tested before it is given to patients; and that mobile deliveries of marijuana would be allowed.

When informed of these issues related to the measure, the percentage of voters saying they would vote against it rose to 67 percent, including 55 percent who described their opinions as “definitely no,” 9 percent as “probably no” and 3 percent as undecided but leaning toward voting no.

“This poll demonstrates that the majority of Riverside residents strongly oppose opening marijuana dispensaries within our city and instead support the existing ban,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “The more that voters learn about the initiative, the more likely they are to vote against it.”

The survey of 400 residents was conducted Jan. 17-20 by the firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates. Interviews with randomly selected Riverside voters likely to vote in the June 2 vote-by-mail election were conducted by landline and cellular phone in English and Spanish. The margin of error is +/- 4.9 percent.

In the initial round of questions, 40 percent of respondents expressed support for the measure, which would allow dispensaries. When asked how they would vote, 27 percent responded “definitely yes” and 10 percent responded “probably yes.” Three percent said they were undecided, but leaning toward voting yes.

When potential issues with the measure were introduced, support dropped, with only 28 percent saying they would vote in favor of the measure, including 20 percent as “definitely yes,” 5 percent as “probably yes” and 3 percent undecided but leaning toward yes.

When informed of the City’s existing ban on marijuana, 53 percent said they supported the ban, including 44 percent who said they “strongly support” it. Forty-four percent opposed it, including 34 percent who were strongly opposed. Three percent said they didn’t know or refused to answer.

Voters also would oppose a more restrictive alternative measure if it were placed on the ballot, the survey found. The alternative measure described to voters would permit a limited number of dispensaries and institute rules limiting sales to adults ages 21 and over, instead of 18 and over; require dispensaries to be at least 1,000 feet from schools, colleges, universities, parks, libraries, churches, childcare facilities, jails and drug rehabilitation facilities; and require dispensaries to be at least 300 feet from residential properties. The possible alternative measure also would prohibit mobile sales, require dispensaries to pay local taxes and fees and require criminal background checks of dispensary owners and employees.

Fifty-four percent of poll respondents opposed the alternative measure, with 42 percent of people surveyed saying they would definitely vote no, while 7 percent responded with “probably no” and 5 percent saying they were undecided but leaning toward voting no. Twenty-eight percent said they would definitely vote yes, while 11 percent said they would probably vote yes and 3 percent said they were undecided but leaning toward voting yes.

Such an alternative measure could confuse voters, pollsters said, and opponents of the original measure would be better served by educating voters on its shortcomings. For example, the measure that will appear on the June 2 ballot would give preference to dispensary owners who have operated in defiance of the existing ban on marijuana sales within the Riverside city limits.

A solid majority of residents surveyed – 57 percent – were aware that the Riverside City Council already has banned marijuana sales, according to the survey. About 30 percent of voters surveyed were unaware of the ban, while another 13 percent said they did not think such a ban existed.

The poll also gauged voters’ opinions on other issues facing the city, including renovation of existing city facilities or the construction of new facilities.

The Riverside County Registrar of Voters has designated the ballot initiative proposed by dispensary operators at Measure A on the June 2 ballot.