



GOVERNOR TIM WALZ: DRUG POLICY RECORD

AUGUST 2024

Drug Policy Action believes that drug policy should be grounded in evidence, health, equity, and human rights. The 2024 U.S. presidential election will have critical implications for drug policy nationwide. It's important you know the facts about each candidate's record and history.

WALZ SUPPORTS DRUG POLICY REFORM

Governor Tim Walz has a strong record of championing treatment and harm reduction services. In his capacity as Minnesota Governor, Walz signed a number of criminal justice and drug policy reforms into law. Most notably, Walz signed a bill into law to legalize marijuana in Minnesota.¹ By selecting Walz as Kamala Harris' running mate, the Democratic presidential ticket now consists of two candidates who support marijuana legalization – a historic first.

WALZ SUPPORTS MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

In 2023, Walz signed a bill into law that legalized marijuana, making Minnesota the 23rd state in the U.S. to end marijuana prohibition.² At the time, Walz said "what we know right now is prohibition does not work. We've criminalized a lot of folks who are going to start the expungement process on those records."³ Walz was particularly supportive of Minnesota's cannabis management office proposals to increase the number of social equity applicants to participate in Minnesota's legal marijuana marketplace.⁴

While serving in Congress from 2007-2019, Walz also sponsored and cosponsored legislation to promote medical marijuana research for veterans,⁵ create a regulated hemp program,⁶ and legalize non-intoxicating CBD.⁷

KEY FEDERAL LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY WALZ:

- Cosponsored [Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2015](#)
- Cosponsored [Charlotte's Web Medical Access Act of 2017](#)
- Sponsored [VA Medicinal Cannabis Research Act of 2018](#)

KEY STATE LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY WALZ:

- Signed [HF 100](#) (2023)

WALZ SUPPORTS COMPREHENSIVE CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM

In 2023, Walz signed SF 2909 into law, a comprehensive criminal legal reform bill. Specifically, the bill: eliminates juvenile life without parole; enacts a "clean slate" provision to automatically expunge certain crimes; limits no-knock warrants; and other reforms. In the pursuit of the drug war, police have been given unchecked power to use aggressive, militarized tactics, like no-knock warrants. These practices are disproportionately used against people of color in drug investigations, which in too many instances has led to killings, particularly of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people.⁸ Police militarization tactics like no-knock warrants are inextricably linked to federal drug policy, and much of the funding for police militarization has come from programs created, in part, to enforce drug prohibition.⁹

KEY STATE LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY WALZ:

- [Executive action](#) (2021)
- Signed [Senate Floor 2909](#) (2023)

WALZ SUPPORTS A HEALTH-BASED APPROACH TO THE OVERDOSE CRISIS

Under the Walz administration, Minnesota became a leader in investing in treatment and harm reduction services. In 2022, Walz established the Advisory Council on Opioids, Substance Use, and Addiction.¹⁰ The council consists of up to 18 members appointed by the governor and contains members who are community leaders, individuals with direct experience with addiction, individuals providing treatment services, and other relevant stakeholders. Walz also created a new government position in 2022, the Addiction and Recovery Director, to lead addiction and recovery work as well as direct the activities and priorities of the subcabinet and advisory council.¹¹

Notably, Walz expressed his support for harm reduction by signing SF 2909 into law.¹² The bill expands access to harm reduction services, as well as decriminalizes drug paraphernalia and residue. Walz also signed laws that allowed overdose prevention centers and created a psychedelics task force.¹³

Despite his track record of supporting health approaches to respond to drug use, Walz also supported increased criminal penalties for fentanyl activity. Yet, criminal penalties increase overdose risk and make it much less likely that individuals will seek health services for substance use.¹⁴

KEY STATE LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY WALZ:

- Signed [Senate file 2954](#) (2023)
- Signed [Senate file 3663](#) (2023)

If you have questions about this information please contact our Director of Federal Affairs Maritza Perez Medina at mperez@drugpolicy.org.

Visit www.drugpolicy.org/OverdosePlan to learn about our campaign demanding an overdose prevention plan from the presidential candidates.

Drug Policy Action works to pass new drug laws and policies grounded in evidence, health, equity, and human rights — and undertakes a wide range of activities including political advocacy and electoral work to support these principles. Drug Policy Action is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit 501(c)(4) organization, and is the advocacy and political partner of the Drug Policy Alliance. Learn more at drugpolicyaction.org.

END NOTES

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