Timeline of Marijuana Law in the United States

Early Americans, including George Washington, grow cannabis for industrial and medicinal purposes.

Pre-1850's

1911

Massachusetts becomes first state to limit sale and use of cannabis by requiring a prescription for sales of hemp.



• Marihuana Tax Act of 1937

The first major federal limita tion on marijuana. The Marihuana Tax Act heavily taxed the sale of cannabis, essentially prohibiting all sale and use of cannabis.

1937

1970-Present

The federal law classified drugs on four different schedules or categories of seriousness. Marijuana is classified as a Schedule 1 drug, meaning it was illegal and considered among the most dangerous substances with the highest penalties. The law is still in place today.

Controlled
Substances Act

Medical Marijuana is Legalized in California

CA voters pass Proposition 215 to legalize the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

1996

1998-2017

Twenty-eight additional states and Washington D.C. pass laws permitting the use of medical marijuana.

Colorado and Washington become the first two U.S. states to legalize recreation al marijuana after their respective voters approve adult use measures.

2012

Voters in six additional states pass measures to legalize recreational marijuana.

2014-2016

2014-Present

The Rohrabacher-Blumenauer Amendment, which prohib its the Justice Department from spending funds to interfere with the implementa tion of state medical marijua na laws, becomes law as part of a spending bill. Over two-plus years, it is extended multiple times and is still in place today.