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Cities beyond Seattle dealing with medical pot fallout

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Seattle has taken the [first step](#) toward overseeing its growing number of medical marijuana dispensaries – and it likely won't be the last Washington city to grapple with how to regulate the pot shops.



On Tuesday, the Tacoma City Council will hold an informational discussion about medical marijuana in that city. "It is on the radar," said Rob McNair-Huff, spokesman for the City of Tacoma. "It's going to be a discussion about what could be done."

Cities across the state were left in the lurch when Gov. Chris Gregoire vetoed most of a bill passed by the Legislature last year that would've set clearer state regulations on medical marijuana use and establish a licensing system and patient registry. Gregoire said she worried state workers could've face federal prosecution. Evergreen State voters approved legalizing

medical marijuana in 1998. Washington is one of [16 states](#) which allows marijuana use for medical purposes, but the federal government does not recognize any medicinal use for cannabis.

But increasingly some city officials – especially in the larger municipalities in Washington state – say they'll have to do something to address the proliferation of dispensaries. During the legislative session officials from Seattle and Tacoma urged state lawmakers to pass a regulatory framework for cities.

In Seattle such businesses have popped up in places like the U-District, Capitol Hill and SoDo. The measure Seattle passed Monday will required medical marijuana dispensaries to obtain a business license, pay taxes and fees and meet city land use codes. They would also be subject to the requirements of the city's "Chronic Nuisance Property Law," meaning if there are repeated complaints about activity at the establishments they could face fines or possible closure. The "open use and display of cannabis" would also be prohibited at the dispensaries. Seattle Councilmembers say they'll next address specific zoning rules for the pot shops.

While places like Seattle and Tacoma have mulled passing their own rules for medical cannabis, other localities have sought to ban them outright. Kent, Snohomish and North Bend are among the towns that have recently passed moratoriums on dispensaries within town limits.

Medical pot is an issue beyond the Puget Sound region. The Kennewick and Pasco City Councils are among those [debating](#) the issue and other Eastern Washington cities are grappling with it, as well.

"Spokane has dispensaries and has had raids of dispensaries by federal authorities recently," state Sen. Majority Leader Lisa Brown, D-Seattle, told [seattlepi.com](#) last week. "The bill that passed the Senate had support on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the mountains...I think sensible regulation is the only way to go with this. The public has spoken and wants access to the product and patients deserve that. And we have a big quagmire out there in terms of being able to provide that."

Brown said she "absolutely" thought the Legislature would take up the medical marijuana issue again in 2012.

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