



# *Regulating Alcohol In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

*2015 Annual Conference – San Diego, CA*

Dear NCSLA Member,

The National Conference of State Liquor Administrators, Incorporated (NCSLA) will assemble June 14-17<sup>th</sup> at the Rancho Bernardo Inn for its 2015 annual meeting and conference in San Diego, California. Serving as conference host is the California Alcoholic Beverage Control and Director Timothy Gorsuch.

The annual conference theme is “**Regulating Alcohol In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**,” and the business agenda will cover a number of diverse and current issues over the course of three (3) days.

As we arrive at the middle of 2015 and look at all that is happening not only with the legalization of marijuana, but with its widespread cultural and political acceptance, we have to acknowledge that we have passed the “tipping point” when it comes to the broadest possible legal and societal acceptance of legalized medicinal and recreational marijuana. That’s why it’s important to continue the discussion of cannabis developments and advancements so plan to attend the session, ***Prepare to Board the Cannabis Rocket Ship!***, on Tuesday afternoon, June 16.

Colorado, Washington, Alaska, and Oregon have all legalized the recreational use to one degree or another, under various degrees and forms of regulation. Twenty additional states have legalized the medical use of marijuana. Numerous additional states and the federal government are currently also considering proposals for the legalized recreational and/or medicinal use of marijuana.

In order to understand how we have arrived where we are as a country with marijuana, and where we are going, one has to understand what marijuana is and what it isn’t and the chemical components of the plant and the workings of the drug from a recreational and medicinal perspective. Once the plant and drug, as well as the history of its suppression and prohibition are understood, one can begin to understand the blistering pace and momentum of change in marijuana laws in state capitals and the beginning of the movement to bring about legalization at the federal level.

The politics of marijuana – like much of politics – makes for strange bedfellows. The medicinal use of marijuana to cure childhood epilepsy, the potential to collect millions of dollars in taxes, the liberal notion of the freedom to choose to use marijuana in the same manner that we choose to use alcohol combined with the conservative notion that states have the right to decide whether or not to legalize marijuana and if so how to regulate it, combine to form a compelling and persuasive set of arguments to convince a legislature to pass proposed legislation.

Is legal medicinal or recreational marijuana coming to your state? If yes, any time soon? If not, why not? How will it or should it be regulated if it is legalized in your state? Should it be regulated like alcohol by the alcohol regulatory agency in your state? What are the pros and cons of such an approach? What forces are working for or against legalized marijuana in your state? Who will grow, distribute and sell marijuana in your state? How will or should it be regulated? In what form will it be sold? Will it be smoked, only? Will it be in “edible” forms? What types and under what conditions?

How are the Washington and Colorado approaches to legalization different? What lessons has Washington learned from Colorado's experience/from its own experience? What best practices will/should states legalize moving forward? What lessons can the alcohol industry and its evolution provide for the marijuana industry? Who are the players in the marijuana industry now and who will they be in the future? What will be the impact on the alcohol industry? What is the state of the art regarding marijuana potency, testing and THC levels in both smokeable forms and edible forms of marijuana? What is the status of the banking laws? What about the federal government's hands off approach and the lawsuits against Colorado? What is the science behind all these medical claims? The questions are nearly endless.

Answering the questions posed by moderator R.J. O'Hara, Flaherty & O'Hara, Pittsburgh, will be Rick Garza, from Washington, the regulator perhaps best suited to address the long view of marijuana regulation in the context of alcohol regulation in the United States. Joining Director Garza is Matt Cook, Cook Consulting LLC, perhaps the best known marijuana legalization consultant globally; Alison Holcomb, Policy Director for ACLU, and author of Washington state's I-502 legislation; and Adam Stapen, Dill Dill Carr Stonbraker & Hutchings, P.C., an experienced private practitioner in Denver, Colorado. Don't miss this lively, conversational panel as they debate the issues and share their expertise!

Start making your plans NOW to come to San Diego, California from June 14-17, 2015 for this year's annual meeting of the NCSLA! **Registration is now open** so visit [www.ncsla.org](http://www.ncsla.org) today for details, and watch for more exciting updates on the NCSLA 2015 Annual Conference to be broadcast in the coming weeks. *Not a member of NCSLA?* Joining is easy - just complete the [online application form](#). You won't want to miss a minute of these educational and informative sessions in addition to the valuable networking opportunities with colleagues and friends!

I am honored to serve as President of NCSLA this year, and I invite all our members to join me in San Diego for this conference. I hope to see you there!

Bob Hill  
NCSLA President