

CANNABIS

The Psychedelic Renaissance Continues as Colorado Votes on Legalizing Magic Mushrooms

Taking some cues from cannabis, the movement picks up steam from statehouses to trade groups to popular culture



Along with the voter initiative in Colorado, there are at least 20 different states, cities and counties currently decriminalizing psychedelics or building a framework to do so. Jon Cartwright/Getty Images



By **T.L. Stanley**

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Colorado, a pioneer in recreational cannabis sales, could make history again next week if voters pass the Natural Medicine Health Act during the midterm

election.

Proposition 122, placed on the ballot after advocates gathered 100,000 more signatures than required, would legalize psychedelic drugs like mescaline and psilocybin, better known as “magic mushrooms,” for medical use.

Oregon was first to the punch, passing a statewide law in 2020, but Colorado will be the latest entrant into what’s become a national movement to lift bans and grant access to formerly verboten substances.



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PSYCHEDELICS BECOME THE NEXT
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Psychedelics, whether synthetic or plant- or fungus-based, remain federally illegal and classified as Schedule I narcotics, in the same category as heroin—and cannabis.

But along with the voter initiative in Colorado, there are at least 20 different states, cities and counties (by conservative estimate) currently decriminalizing psychedelics or building a framework to do so.

Prime mover

Denver was the groundbreaker, decriminalizing psychedelic drugs in 2019, meaning that arrests for possession were deemed a low priority for law enforcement. That set off a chain reaction that expanded to Oakland and Santa Cruz in California, Washington, several Massachusetts cities and Seattle, among other jurisdictions.

Activists say that was a turning point in the modern psychedelics renaissance, which has mirrored the growth of the **cannabis industry** but has recently outpaced its green wave.

The state and local moves so far have been “little seedlings” that are taking root, according to Omar Figueroa, an attorney and founding member of the newly created Psychedelic Bar Association.

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"It will be the wind in the sails of other activists if Colorado passes the law," Figueroa told Adweek. "It's clear that there's a national will to make this happen, and I think it will be a harbinger of future state legalization initiatives."

Colorado, as a "purple state," is a solid test case for lifting prohibition on hallucinogens, he said, just as it was for cannabis.

"The sky didn't fall when Colorado legalized cannabis," Figueroa said, "and the sky won't fall if they legalize psychedelics."

Colorado's proposition, like Oregon's before it, specifies that psilocybin, DMT, ibogaine and other psychedelics will be used only in state-regulated "healing centers" as medical treatments, overseen by vetted caregivers.

Shelby Hartman, co-founder and CEO of DoubleBlind, a media and educational platform devoted to psychedelics, noted that "the conversation has changed so much in the past few years" and the pace of reform has accelerated "surprisingly fast," alongside heavy investment in the space and stepped-up clinical research. (In 2021, psychedelics companies landed 45 deals that brought in nearly \$600 million in financing, per CB Insights.)

Have a good trip

While local municipalities and statehouses have been debating the potential for psychedelics as a treatment for PTSD, depression, anxiety and other illnesses, there's a flood of references showing up in popular culture.

Standouts in media include the new four-part series on Netflix called *How to Change Your Mind* from bestselling author [Michael Pollan](#) and decorated filmmaker Alex Gibney, which details the history and uses of psychedelics including psilocybin, MDMA, mescaline and LSD.

How To Change Your Mind Official Trailer

(Captions for the video have not been made available to Adweek. We will update the video once captions have been provided.) [Netflix](#)

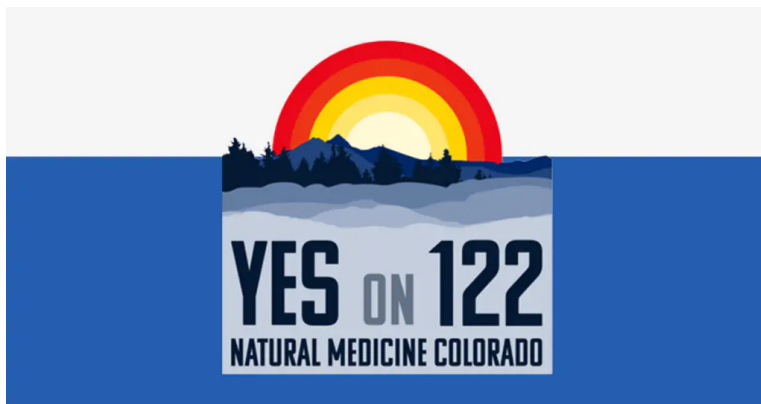
Comedian Sue Perkins recently tripped live on the psychedelic cactus called San Pedro on her Netflix series *Perfectly Legal*, and celebrities from Nick Kroll and Ben Stiller to Sarah Silverman and Rosie Perez have described their mushroom experiences in the documentary film *Have a Good Trip: Adventures in Psychedelics*.

At SXSW 2023, a conference that perennially captures the zeitgeist, the psychedelic panels will outnumber the cannabis sessions next spring, per a recently released schedule of events.

Meantime, professional groups like the Psychedelic Bar Association are popping up around the world as are numerous dedicated gatherings like this week's *Wonderland Miami* and the upcoming *Convergence* from *Psychedelics Today* magazine that tout scientists, investors, artists, doctors and activists on their agendas.

And purpose-driven brand **Dr. Bronner's**, known for its

backing Proposition 122 in Colorado by calling it "the most progressive policy yet."



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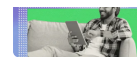


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Psychedelics may be capturing some outsized attention in this election cycle, but weed also has its spot on the ballot, with voters in five states deciding on legalization for adult use sales.

Both industries have followed a similar trajectory, with advocates pushing for research into the drugs' medicinal benefits at the federal level and for **decriminalizing low-level possession on the state and municipal level.**

Investment groups like Palo Santo see those two paths working together in "incremental steps to destigmatize and fuel mainstream acceptance" of psychedelics, co-founder Daniel Goldberg told Adweek. "What's happening now is helping to educate people who only knew of psychedelics from 20 or 30 years ago."

Where the two industries will diverge is on the commerce side, with Goldberg noting that "chocolate mushroom bars" will not be stocked in weed dispensaries in the near future.

Entrepreneurs are already developing mushroom-based brands, minus the hallucinogenic elements.



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Figueroa described as "gourmet medicinal mushrooms," though brands are poised to "flip the switch" whenever the "magic" versions become legal.

The prospect of using psychedelics for "personal growth" is still "years away," according to Goldberg, whose firm focuses on shepherding psychedelics through the FDA approval process. "It's a medical model because these compounds should not be available for sale at retail. So in that way, it'll never look exactly like cannabis."



T.L. STANLEY

@TLStanleyLA terry.stanley@adweek.com

T.L. Stanley is a senior editor at Adweek, where she specializes in consumer trends, cannabis marketing, plant-based food products, pop culture and creativity.

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