



**U. S. Department of Justice**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STATEMENT OF UNITED STATES ATTORNEY LAWRENCE KEEFE**  
**REGARDING FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL CRIMINAL**  
**PROSECUTIONS OF MARIJUANA OFFENSES**

**TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA** – The United States Congress has generally prohibited the cultivation, distribution, and possession of marijuana. It has established significant penalties for these crimes. These marijuana-related activities may serve as the basis for the prosecution of other crimes, such as those prohibited by the money laundering statutes, the unlicensed money transmitter statute, and the Bank Secrecy Act.

The United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Florida’s (“USAO/NDFL”) policy has been - and remains - that in deciding which marijuana cases to prosecute federally, with the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) finite resources, federal prosecutors shall weigh a number of considerations. These considerations include the seriousness of the crime, the deterrent effect of criminal prosecution, and the cumulative impact of particular crimes on a particular community.

The USAO/NDFL remains particularly focused on, and shall continue to target, the direct connection between criminal gun violence and marijuana-related criminal activity. The USAO/NDFL shall continue upon on this same path in marijuana cases and shall exercise its prosecutorial discretion on a case-by-case basis, as we have in the past - with the following exception:

In the event that any local police department, sheriff’s office, or other local or state law enforcement agency within the Northern District of Florida seeks the prosecution of marijuana-related crimes -- and in the event that the State Attorney who has jurisdiction over such crimes refuses to prosecute any marijuana crime -- the USAO will offer to review and, if appropriate, prosecute any such case in the federal criminal justice system. However, the USAO/NDFL requests the State Attorneys permit some of their assistant state attorneys to become temporarily sworn as “Special Assistant United States Attorneys” (“SAUSAs”) to assist the USAO/NDFL in the prosecution of any such cases in federal court.

Attorney General Ashley Moody and Statewide Prosecutor Nicholas Cox have agreed to have some of their Assistant Attorneys General and Assistant Statewide Prosecutors sworn in to be federal SAUSAs to prosecute marijuana-related crimes in the federal criminal justice system. The USAO/NDFL is prepared to serve, support, and partner with our state law enforcement colleagues in any way that we properly can do so.

The USAO/NDFL is hopeful that those State Attorneys in the Northern District of Florida who choose not to prosecute marijuana-related crimes in the state criminal justice system based upon concerns about laboratory testing availability and similar legal issues will contact the USAO/NDFL regarding participation in the USAO/NDFL's SAUSA program.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](#) website. For more information about the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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