

# **Bond Case Briefs**

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## **D.C. Council Decriminalizes Marijuana Possession.**

The D.C. Council voted Tuesday to eliminate criminal penalties for possession of marijuana but left smoking it in public a crime, keeping alive concerns about racial profiling in pot arrests in the District.

With an 11 to 1 vote, several council members reversed their previous support for a more far-reaching measure, weakening an effort to join the quarter of U.S. states that have decriminalized small amounts of marijuana.

While they stuck with their plans to drop possession to a civil offense — akin to a parking ticket — council members decided not to decriminalize public smoking. They did, however, reduce the maximum jail sentence from six months to 60 days.

“I do not want the public smoking of marijuana around my kid — I do not,” said the council’s chairman, Phil Mendelson (D), raising his voice to press his point. “I do not want to have to somehow rationalize to her why that’s okay . . . and I dare say that I’m not alone as a parent.”

Mayor Vincent C. Gray (D) also withdrew his unconditional support for decriminalization. In a letter Tuesday to the council, he and Police Chief Cathy L. Lanier warned that removing the threat of jail time could lead to widespread public smoking of the drug in the District.

But proponents accused the council of thwarting the original measure’s intended effect of protecting low-income African Americans, who because of crowded quarters in city apartments or public housing are more apt to smoke outside and be targeted by police.

According to recent studies, blacks account for nine out of 10 arrests for simple drug possession in the District, although they account for less than half of the city’s population. Rates of drug use among adolescents differ marginally by race.

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View the full story from the Washington Post:

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-council-weakens-bill-to-decriminalize-marijuana/2014/02/04/508eaabe-8d27-11e3-95dd-36ff657a4dae\\_story.html?hpid=z6](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-council-weakens-bill-to-decriminalize-marijuana/2014/02/04/508eaabe-8d27-11e3-95dd-36ff657a4dae_story.html?hpid=z6)