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2014.

Apr. 18, 2013

Residents in Washington state shouldn't plan to buy any legal pot before well into 2014.

State-regulated growing of marijuana will start no earlier than December, more than three months later than conceived in the state's earlier, tentative timeline.

Storefront, retail sales of the drug, originally expected to begin as soon as the end of this year, could have to wait another three months or more for the plants to grow.

The new timetable approved Wednesday by the state Liquor Control Board calls for handing out licenses to producers, processors and retail sellers at the same time, Dec. 1.

That's the deadline set for the board by Initiative 502, approved by voters last November to make Washington one of two states that have legalized marijuana for recreational use. The board had originally planned to stagger the licenses.

"Based on what we've learned over these last few months and the conversations we've had in the forums," board spokesman Brian Smith said, "if you're going to be a potential licensee, I think you want to see the whole landscape of what you're stepping into."

Reactions from representatives of the nascent marijuana industry ranged from support to acceptance. Hilary Bricken, a lawyer whose practice represents more than 100 clients interested in being part of the new industry, said her clients would be glad to preview all three levels of the industry before getting licenses.

“So we don’t open the retail shops until March. What is three months? This is a

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will seek to shut down individual marijuana businesses or the whole state regulation scheme.

Bricken said the timetable is still aggressive. She wouldn’t be surprised to see further delay — and perhaps rules that somehow allow for sales of marijuana grown earlier as part of the medical market. Smith said the board could contemplate some “creative way” of making licenses retroactive for some growers, but he said that’s not under consideration now and would likely require a legal opinion.

Draft rules would be public in mid-May under the timeline published Wednesday. They could be changed based on reaction and then would be formally filed as drafts in mid-June, go through public hearings in late July, and take effect in late August.

Potential producers, processors and retailers could start applying in September, and the board would start issuing licenses Dec. 1.

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