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Confusion on Question 2

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State officials say the details on how to implement the passing of ballot Question 2 are still hazy, and they don't expect the new law decriminalizing marijuana to go into effect until late December or early January.

"Until that time, the current law remains in effect, that is, possession of any amount of marijuana is still a criminal offense," said a statement from Attorney General Martha Coakley.

On Election Day, about two-thirds of Massachusetts voters approved Question 2, which states anyone over 18 caught with an ounce or less of marijuana would be issued a civil fine of $100, and would not face criminal charges. However, the citations would likely be recorded in police logs, according to a press release from Coakley.

Violators under 18 would have to complete a drug awareness program and community service within one year of the offense, or pay up to $1,000 in fines.

Officials say the regulation would not change existing laws, practices or policies concerning operating a motor vehicle or taking other actions while under the influence of marijuana, unlawful possession of prescription forms of marijuana or selling, manufacturing or trafficking in marijuana, according to The Springfield Republican.

The new law is also unlikely to alter on-campus policies at the University of Massachusetts, according to spokesman Ed Blaguszewski.

"I don't believe this will change any of the protocols [on campus, including housing]," Blaguszewski said. "Any cases in which police cite students for misconduct will be sent to the Dean of Students as they have in the past."

"Right now, we don't know how we are going to enforce it," UMass Police Chief Barbara O'Connor told The Daily Hampshire Gazette. "I think the biggest issue is solving the how, and once the how is done, I don't see any big implications beyond that."

For law enforcement, sorting out the specifics of how to handle the new law is becoming a major challenge.

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