

Overall, networking events help the entire industry, Serrano said.

“These events are going to help inform and prepare these leaders to enter this industry and create their dreams and find community within them,” he said.

— *Jelani Gibson | NJ Cannabis Insider*

EXCLUSIVE FOR INSIDERS

 **THE D.C. REPORT**

## With Biden in next week, and several GOP senators in legalized states, progress on cannabis seems imminent



Chuck Schumer, the New York Democrat who has introduced his own cannabis legislation, will be setting the agenda in the U.S. Senate. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

Sure there's [the second impeachment \(https://www.nj.com/politics/2021/01/trump-impeached-again-what-happens-now.html\)](https://www.nj.com/politics/2021/01/trump-impeached-again-what-happens-now.html) of outgoing President **Donald Trump**, and a new [coronavirus stimulus bill \(https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2021/01/second-stimulus-check-update-2000-payments-will-be-the-first-order-of-legislative-business-schumer-says.html\)](https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2021/01/second-stimulus-check-update-2000-payments-will-be-the-first-order-of-legislative-business-schumer-says.html) to pass, and efforts to combat the pandemic and expand vaccinations, and an entire Cabinet to confirm, and perhaps bipartisan infrastructure legislation to pass.

But with **Joe Biden** taking the oath of office as president on Wednesday and Democrats poised to control both the House and the Senate, efforts to remove the federal ban on marijuana will be on the agenda as well.

“While it is likely that the first days of the executive and legislative agenda will be consumed by the emergent matters of the times, cannabis reform at the federal level provides a uniquely unifying opportunity for these disparate voices to coalesce and create a positive change,” said **Charles Gormally**, co-chair of the cannabis law practice at Brach Eichler in Rosedale.

Three marijuana bills passed the House in the last Congress, but the Senate refused to take them up. Now **Chuck Schumer**, the New York Democrat who has introduced his own cannabis legislation, will be setting the agenda rather than **Mitch McConnell**, Kentucky Republican.

“We appear to remain on track to federal descheduling,” said **Nathaniel Gurien**, chief executive of Fincann, which helps provide financial services to legal marijuana businesses. “Fasten your seatbelts, everyone.”

Providing fuel for the effort are the ever-increasing number of states, including New Jersey, that have fully legalized cannabis. Almost one-third of the Senate – 30 senators – now come from states that allow recreational weed.

More importantly, six are Republicans, and just like former U.S. Sen, **Cory Gardner** of Colorado, they will face pressure to represent their constituents' views and team up with the Democratic majority to support legalization on the federal level.

The big prize is the [Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act \(https://nadle.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=394017\)](https://nadle.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=394017), or MORE Act, which passed the House last December.

The measure would decriminalize cannabis on the federal level, require federal courts to expunge prior nonviolent marijuana convictions, and tax cannabis to help communities hardest hit by the war on drugs, fund job training programs, and provide loans to minority-owned small businesses seeking to enter the cannabis industry.

Though the Senate never took it up, the historic approval by the House was “a huge step forward for the movement,” said **Jeffrey Zucker**, co-founder and president of Green Lion Partners, a cannabis strategy firm.

“It shows that there is a clear understanding now amongst legislators of the terrible harms that have been caused by the drug war and the need to end the absurdity,” Zucker said.

— *Jonathan D. Salant* | *NJ.com*

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 **GUEST COLUMN**

## Why growers need a testing lab to help them succeed