

# *Colombia Takes First Step To Regulate Marijuana Use*

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Bogotá, November 12 (RHC-teleSUR) -- The regulation of the use of marijuana for medical purposes was approved in the first debate of a Senate committee in Colombia on Tuesday.

With a vote of 13 to two, members of a committee of Colombia's Senate approved legalizing marijuana for medical and therapeutic use in a country in which this drug is vastly consumed by the population. The measure still needs to be debated by one more senatorial commission and two lower house committees.

The bill was proposed by Juan Manuel Galan of the Liberal Party. He said that he expects the bill will be passed into law before June 2015. He stressed that the purpose of the bill is not to legalize marijuana but to "regulate its medical, therapeutic and scientific use."

The sponsor of the legislation spoke of the promising uses of medical marijuana, including the elimination of symptoms of illnesses such as diabetes, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, arthrosis, some types of cancer and the effects of chemotherapy.

In the committee debate, senators from the Conservative Party opposed the recreational use of marijuana but supported medical uses.

Viviana Morales, one of the thirteen senators who supported the measure, proposed the inclusion of another article in the project that would “terminally prohibit the importation of medicines containing cannabis so that the business will leave something to the country that has lost so much in the drug trade. We can take on the task of producing these medicines.”

The additional article was approved by a vote of 11 to four.

President Juan Manuel Santos had previously voiced his support for the medical and therapeutic use of marijuana.

The next step is to take the bill to the plenary session of the Senate, where it will come to a vote within the next few days.

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