

VETERAN ADVOCACY & IMPACT ANALYSIS

How Public Chapter 526 Eliminated Legal Access for Tennessee Veterans

Prior to Public Chapter 526, Tennessee veterans had legal access to hemp-derived cannabinoid products, including THCA flower and other compounds, under the regulatory framework established by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA). Many veterans used these products for chronic pain, PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other service-connected conditions. Public Chapter 526 eliminated that legal access for thousands of veterans by banning the products they relied on and creating a chaotic new regulatory system.

1. FRONT-LINE RETAIL IMPACT ON VETERANS

Independent Tennessee retailers have documented that the elimination of raw flower and high-potency options under Public Chapter 526 directly harmed high-vulnerability populations — including military veterans managing physical and psychological trauma. Many of these veterans had been using products that were legally available and regulated under the previous TDA framework.

"I have customers that have cancer. I have customers that have Parkinson's. We have veterans that have severe PTSD. All of these people are without because of this."

— Tennessee hemp retailer, WREG-TV News

2. VETERAN PETITIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

Disabled military veterans in Tennessee have organized public petitions and challenges highlighting how the Total THC restrictions in Public Chapter 526 removed legal access to products they had been using responsibly under the previous regulatory system. Many veterans report being forced to either go without relief or seek products from unregulated sources.

"Tennessee veterans should have the same medical treatment and access as their fellow veterans have in surrounding states without having to sneak over the state line to get it."

— Tennessee Veterans Legislative Committee (TNVET)

3. THE TENNESSEE VETERANS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE (TNVET)

The Tennessee Veterans Legislative Committee (TNVET), representing major congressionally chartered military and veterans organizations across the state, has repeatedly called for safe, legal botanical access. Their policy positions highlight that cannabinoid therapies help mitigate chronic pain, TBI, and PTSD — conditions common among former military personnel. Under the previous TDA framework, veterans had legal access to these products through licensed retailers. Public Chapter 526 removed that pathway.

SUMMARY: *Thousands of Tennessee veterans lost legal access to products they had been using responsibly under the previous Department of Agriculture regulatory framework. Public Chapter 526 did not simply add new safety rules — it eliminated a working system that provided veterans with legal, regulated options for managing service-connected conditions. Prohibition does not eliminate veteran demand; it pushes veterans toward unregulated channels that lack age verification, testing, and labeling standards.*

RECOMMENDATION

The General Assembly should restore the legal access that existed under the previous TDA regulatory framework for veterans and other adults, while adding targeted improvements for accountability and enforcement. The Tennessee Responsible Hemp Commerce Act provides a clear path to restore veteran access through age-gated specialty retail channels, individual handler permits, and laboratory reciprocity — without returning to the unregulated environment that existed before any state framework was in place.

Sources: WREG-TV / LocalMemphis reporting; Change.org veteran petitions; Tennessee Veterans Legislative Committee (TNVET) policy agenda; Public Chapter 423 (previous TDA framework); Public Chapter 526 (current TABC framework). Current as of July 2026.

This document is provided for legislative and public policy consideration.