



# Pot Stocks, ETFs And Top News From The Cannabis Industry This Week

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4/20 is here, and in time for International Weed Day, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) announced plans to introduce a bill to decriminalize cannabis on a federal level next week.

“The war on cannabis costs U.S. taxpayers \$3.6 billion per year. 46 percent of all drug arrests are for simple cannabis possession, which only benefits the private for-profit prison system,” Smith said Friday. “I have championed cannabis decriminalization at the state level, but it’s past time for Congress to move on this important issue,” Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith told Benzinga.

A U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisory panel voted unanimously in favor of approving GW Pharmaceuticals PLC- ADR [GWPH, +0.16%](#) 's cannabis derived drug Epidolex for the treatment of two rare childhood-onset forms of epilepsy, which are commonly treatment-resistant.

“Thursday was a great day for patients across the nation,” Sen. Daylin Leach (D-Penn.) said during a conversation with Benzinga. “Obviously this is terrific news for people suffering from epilepsy, but it’s also a harbinger of more FDA approval of cannabis products to come.”

See reactions from four other experts in another Benzinga exclusive.

Despite the good news, the United States Marijuana Index, which tracks 17 of the largest marijuana stocks in the U.S., lost 5.9 percent. Meanwhile, the North American Marijuana Index, which also includes Canadian stocks, posted losses of 5 percent.

The Horizons Marijuana Life Sciences Index ETF [HMLSF, +0.05%](#) slipped about 4 percent over the week, while the ETFMG Alternative Harvest ETF [MJ, -4.10%](#) slipped about 1 percent.

Here are some of the top marijuana stocks in U.S. exchanges and how they performed this week:

Public relations and investor relations firm KCSA Strategic Communications acquired cannabis-focused PR firm Salar Media Group. Salar Media Group's founder and CEO Cynthia Salarizadeh will join KCSA as a managing partner and said, "As the cannabis industry continues to evolve, we continue to see every aspect of it mature. In order to bring federal legalization into the end zone, it will require strategic communications and a lot of investment.

"I built Salar Media Group to help reverse the damage done by Reefer Madness in the 30s; to help advance the industry through highlighting all of the best qualities and brands in order for the world to take notice of the benefits. [M]y clients will now have a larger infrastructure that will provide them a competitive advantage. The industry is now moving fast toward full legalization around the world. Those with the best teams and resources will be able to withstand the coming rush of big business interest and be able to take advantage of that development versus sink as a result."

A week ahead of the NFL Draft, former offensive NFL lineman with the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Chicago Bears, Eben Britton announced the launch of his partnership with tele-health cannabis company Heally, to provide athletes with access to medical recommendations for cannabis via his charity Athletes for CARE.

Related Link: [Football And Weed: Former NFL Players Weigh In On Why Many Are Getting Involved With CBD Companies](#)

Heally, which offers patients access a private patient portal from the privacy of their own homes or offices, will be offering personalized medical recommendations to athletes, as well as access to CBD.

“Cannabis is a great alternative to highly addictive opiates for pain medication. Especially CBD, since it seems to help treat pain and inflammation without the psychoactive effects that can deter from an athlete's focus,” said Dr. Jean Talleyrand, M.D., founder of Medicann and one of the doctors on Heally's platform.

Medical Marijuana Acquisition Corporation (or MMAC) is launching its first proprietary marijuana strain under the name Triple 7, a pesticide-free and tested to California's rigorous regulatory standards.

“As a successful serial entrepreneur with a long history in media, automotive, and the digital content delivery businesses, [MMAC founder] Scott Ginsburg saw an exciting opportunity in the cannabis industry, and specifically in the California market. As a result he formed a company, invested significant personal dollars and attracted additional investors to build premier cultivation facilities,” Jonathan Anthony, director of marketing and brand development for Triple 7 said.

Cannabis-focused payment solutions platform Alt Thirty Six announced that payments expert Don Schroeder, whose work led to the acceptance of electronic payments at quick service restaurants like McDonald's Corporation [MCD, -1.27%](#) has joined the company as Chief Architect. Schroeder will work to develop and maintain Alt Thirty Six's platform to fully eliminate the need for cash in the cannabis industry by using blockchain technology and Dash, a decentralized digital currency, to facilitate the transfer of funds between merchants, suppliers, vendors and customers. “There is an incredible need in the cannabis industry to go cashless because cash management is expensive, costing dispensaries upwards of 15 to 20 percent of their revenue” Schroeder said. “In addition, cash also presents a significant security risk. By going cashless, using Alt Thirty Six, dispensaries can increase profitability and reduce or eliminate risk.”

The Peak Beyond, a cannabis retail technology company that designs and manufactures interactive smart displays, is utilizing its technology in the launch of the first ever cannabis smart store, 805 Beach Breaks, in Grover Beach, California. This smart-store revolutionizes the cannabis shopping experience by creating a fully interactive store where all of the products are intuitively connected to 10 large-format displays, sparking what could become a major retail technology trend.

“This launch is momentous for the cannabis industry. The industry is known for pushing boundaries and we are very lucky to deliver this kind of retail technology and innovation into the hands of modern shoppers,” CEO Jeff LaPenna told Benzinga.

Related Link: Wonder Women Of Weed: Sara Gullickson, The Licensing Advisor Sitting At The Head Of The Boys' Table

Strive Wellness of Nevada has been approved for a provisional medical cannabis cultivation and processing license aided by Sara Gullickson, founder and CEO of Dispensary Permits. Gullickson will serve as COO, while Donald Burton and Larry Lemons will serve as CEO and CFO, respectively.

The World Medical Cannabis Conference & Expo successfully concluded its second-annual show with record-breaking attendance in Pittsburgh. The three-day expo drew over 5,700 attendees and 175 exhibitors, who showcased the latest in cannabis products, design, and technology. Expo host, Compassionate Certification Centers, will continue to host educational events throughout the year with plans to open 25 medical cannabis offices by December 2018. Currently, Pennsylvania’s medical marijuana program has registered 30,413 people, and nearly 12,000 certified patients have purchased identification cards.

Leafbuyer.com, the largest online resource for cannabis deals and specials, will donate part of its sales proceeds from The Mile High 4/20 Festival in Denver to the Realm of Caring Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides support and resources for medical cannabis patients using cannabinoid therapy.

“We are thrilled to partner with Realm of Caring for this community outreach project. Our number one goal is to raise money for them, help collect donations and educate the public on the way it responds to cannabis.” says Kurt Rossner, CEO of parent company Leafbuyer Technologies Inc **LBUY, -5.45%**

Aphria reported fiscal third quarter revenue of C\$10.2 million (\$8 million), up 100 percent year-over-year, and 20 percent quarter-over-quarter.

Paragon launched an online application program for cannabis companies to enter to win a free membership to its new co-working space in Los Angeles,

California. The Paragon Space is set to open its doors later this summer. On May 10, the company will be giving away 30 day-passes, three weekly passes and one monthly pass. Companies interested can fill out the application form [here](#).

“We want to be the driver of collaboration within the cannabis industry. Our giveaway sends some support back to the community that has supported us from the beginning,” CEO Jessica Versteeg said.

Cannabis testing and scientific research company EVIO Inc [EVIO, -16.16%](#) announced the acquisition of 50 percent of Keystone Labs, a privately held, independent contract-testing lab specializing in quality testing for regulated industries in Canada.

“Keystone Labs is one of 37 laboratories licensed by Health Canada and one of only three laboratories that hold both a Dealer’s License and a GMP Drug Establishment License for cannabis testing,” said William Waldrop, CEO and co-founder of EVIO. “This acquisition is a significant milestone for EVIO as it will mark our first foray into an international market. We look forward to increasing consumer safety and confidence, while further pursuing our aggressive expansion plans for 2018.”

Cannabis science company Tikun Olam finalized a deal with Pennsylvania-based Ilera Healthcare to bring the former’s medical marijuana strains to the state.

“We are pleased to be bringing these award-winning strains to the patients of Pennsylvania,” said Tikun Olam USA chief marketing officer Stephen Gardener. “We have spent over a decade of research and studies to improve the efficacy of these unique strains to assist patients with a variety of ailments and conditions. We look forward to working with Ilera and their extensive pharmaceutical experience, to bring symptom relief to the patients in the Keystone state.”

Learn more about these news, and others on [Leaflink](#), [Flowhub](#), [Green Bits](#), [Medicine Man Technologies Inc](#) [MDCL, -9.09%](#) [MassRoots](#), [MPX Bioceutical Corp](#) [MPXEF, -3.19%](#) [CannaRoyalty Corp](#) [CNNRF, -0.89%](#) [Livewell Foods Canada](#), and [Civilized Worldwide](#), with our partners at [Green Market Report’s Marijuana Money](#):

Virginia has been making strides in changing cannabis policy by recently expanding laws to include affirmative defense for people in possession of CBD cannabis oil with less than 5 percent THC and expanding qualifying conditions.

The state's first CBD specialty store, District Hemp Botanicals, is owned and operated by founder young African-American Barbara Biddle and Nick Picarelli, who joined her in August 2017 to help her rebrand her headshop into a store that exclusively offers hemp CBD products.

"A particular point of pride is the wide selection of products we are able to offer without compromising on quality. The hemp industry is booming with innovation and competition, which has led to an abundance of excellent products at increasingly affordable prices. Every single day we're bombarded with better products from small businesses across the board looking to stay ahead of curve," Biddle said.

District Hemp is more a calling than a career choice, she added.

"Working in the hemp industry has given me an opportunity to devote my life to something meaningful and has offered a platform to spread the word regarding something I'm passionate about; the benefits of cannabis. The market environment in the industrial hemp industry has brought to life the American Dream. It has allowed someone like me, with very limited resources, to quickly get off the ground with a flourishing health and wellness store. Knowing that I'm paving the way for other CBD businesses warms my heart and motivates me to keep to keep pushing for more awareness."