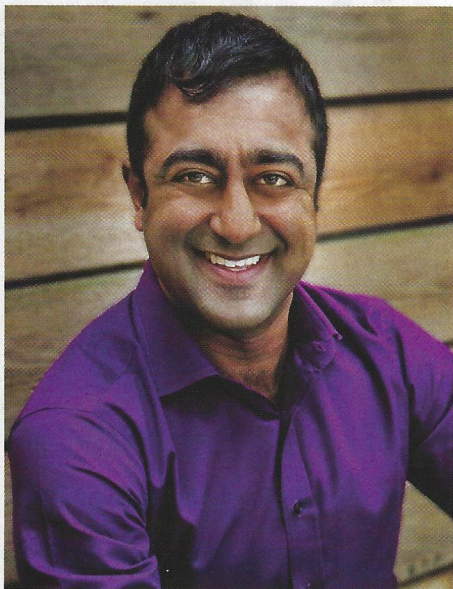


# The Law of the Land

Finding Expert Legal Advice in Washington's Complex Marketplace



Neil Juneja

Going into business in the cannabis industry is terrifying. Entrepreneurs face a gauntlet of rules and regulations and failure to comply can result in jail time, fines, or losing a business license. Compliance law aside, how does one protect intellectual property in an industry with no federal oversight? For savvy business owners, the safest answer to any of those questions is found in a lawyer's office.

Cannabis law is a thriving niche in Washington state. Gleam Law, headquartered in Seattle, has been working with cannabis companies since legalization in 2012. It offers services from seed to sale, including business transactions and administrative law to intellectual property rights on a national and international level.

Neil Juneja, founder and managing partner at Gleam Law, told *Cannabis & Tech Today* that Washington is unique in its approach to cannabis for a few reasons. "We are the last state that requires in-state residency for actual ownership or share of profit for cannabis. We also don't allow vertical integration, which can create higher costs."

Washington can be litigious when it comes to violations and thanks to the hundreds of millions it's pulling in from cannabis taxes, it can afford to take cases to court. Effective legal teams offer business owners insight to prevent messy court battles. Some legal firms can act as advisors on other aspects of business development as well.

Juneja noted, "What clients find most valuable is our extreme depth of knowledge on every aspect of the industry, from cannabinoid oxidation and synthesization, to different types of extracts and edibles. We know the products

and we know the market, and can advise clients on commercialization, as well as the legal aspects, of course. Plus changing regulations create new opportunities, and we can advise our clients on new product categories to enter into. We look at it with an eye for business, not just a legal perspective."

Another area where Washingtonians often seek advice is around intellectual property (IP) rights. Cannabis and IP protection are at odds. Patents are governed by federal law; the same is true of copyrights. Since cannabis is still a federally illegal substance, the feds won't patent cannabis products or companies. But, trademarks can be regulated by state law. This is where a lawyer's expertise can be invaluable to business owners.

Protecting one's brand, products, and inventions is necessary to run a profitable enterprise. But it's not an easy thing to do. Juneja noted Gleam Law has helped some of its clients obtain the first types of trademarks registered in the cannabis industry.

"We've pioneered some of the first cannabis, psilocybin, and paraphernalia trademarks. We're moving forward with new case law for intellectual and property infringement and defense." He said IP law has been getting more complicated over the years, so seeking professional help with IP concerns is crucial.

While doing business in a state with well-established regulations can be difficult, it's easier to work with a legal partner, who knows the law and can help adhere to it, than to be ignorant of regulations and seek help once infractions are enforced. ♦

