

## **Colorado court rules employees can be fired for medical marijuana use**

Washington (dpa) - The Colorado Supreme Court ruled Monday that businesses in the state can fire employees for using marijuana, even if it is off-duty or for medical reasons.

The ruling comes in a state that is on the forefront of the marijuana legalisation movement in the United States. Medical marijuana has been legal in Colorado for more than a decade and recreational use has been legal for more than a year.

The ruling by Colorado's top court affirms decisions made by lower state courts in a case brought against cable television provider Dish Network by a quadriplegic employee who used medical marijuana to control muscle spasms.

The man who filed the case, Brandon Coats, said he had never been under the influence while at work for Dish Network, where he was a phone operator until failing a random drug test in 2010. Colorado law allows employers to set their own policies for drug testing their employees.

Coats based his argument on a Colorado law that protects employees from being fired for "lawful activities." But the court unanimously agreed that the statute only protects activities that are legal under both state and federal law. Marijuana remains illegal under US federal law.

Coats' attorney called the decision "devastating."

Michael Evans said the ruling means people in Colorado who use medical marijuana will have to choose between work and using the drug until Congress changes US federal law.

The case may have significant implications for employers across Colorado and other states that are adapting marijuana legalisation laws.

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