

Rensselaer County Kratom Ban: What Happened

September 8

Rensselaer County Legislature regular meeting, Local Law T-4, a local law prohibiting the sale and distribution of kratom. Rundown prepared September 8, 2026 from the county's Facebook livestream (facebook.com/RenssCoLeg).

RESULT	NO VOTES	ABSENT	WHAT'S NEXT
Passed 15 to 2	Sabo Zalewski	Ashley Loveridge	County Executive McLaughlin must hold a public hearing before he signs. The date is set after passage and has not been announced.

Public comment

The Chair opened public comment at 0:53:40 and told the room she was inviting everyone signed up to speak, even if more than three people wanted to address the same subject, as she had the week before. Residency was not raised. Three people spoke on T-4, all against a blanket ban.

- **David Spenziero, East Greenbush resident.** Spoke about his father's fatal overdose in 2017 and his own recovery, and described using low-dose whole-leaf kratom alongside outpatient treatment. His ask: outlaw the concentrated extracts, enforce the State's 21-and-over rule, get the products off convenience store counters, and keep the natural leaf legal.
- **Tracey Hudson, The Kratom Shop, Schenectady.** Described her own reasons for using traditional kratom, her customers, and the difference between leaf and concentrated 7-OH products. Addressed the deaths raised at the September 2 Forum, citing a toxicology report showing a blood alcohol level of 0.307 and prescription depressants in one case. Pointed to the federal scheduling of 7-OH and the state bill on the Governor's desk.
- **Allison Smith, Global Kratom Coalition.** Outlined the DEA's temporary scheduling of three 7-OH substances and the threshold rulemaking, New York's 21-plus and labeling rules, and the bill awaiting the Governor's signature. Said last week's testimony conflated leaf with concentrates without evidence of causation, and objected to a Legislature social media post about a Mechanicville murder case being used to support the ban.

On the floor

The kratom item was reached at about 1:38 in the recording. Three votes were taken.

Motion	Moved by	Result	Notes
Table T-4 for further study	Zalewski	Failed 8 to 9	Every non-sponsor present voted to table: Fleming, Galuski, Nichols, Rutecki, Sabo, Weaver, Zalewski, plus Grant (a sponsor; his vote is unclear in the captions). Zalewski cited Suffolk County, which held hearings and narrowed its bill to synthetics only.
Amend to add a sunset clause	Zalewski	Failed, about 4 to 13	The law would have lapsed once the State enacted preempting legislation. Sponsors argued a 7-OH-only state law would never trigger it. Yes votes: Nichols, Rutecki, Sabo, Zalewski.

Motion	Moved by	Result	Notes
Adopt T-4 as written	Patire (sponsor)	Passed 15 to 2	Sabo and Zalewski voted no. Five members who voted to table then voted for the law: Fleming, Galuski, Nichols, Rutecki, Weaver.

The floor amendment we asked for was not available. Legislator Zalewski said a synthetics-only version might have passed, but the Legislature was advised that a substantive change could not be made on the floor at the adoption vote. The threshold alternative never got a recorded vote. For the other counties, that language has to reach the bill in committee or with the county attorney, before the adoption vote is scheduled.

What was said. Zalewski spoke for about ten minutes against the law: two distinct products, national overdose figures in context, the comparison to alcohol and tobacco, the risk of a black market, and regulation and education as the alternative. He named Tracey Hudson from the floor and encouraged people to talk to her. Nichols voted yes but asked the county to run a public education effort on withdrawal and where people can find help. Bayly explained his votes by citing the three mothers who spoke September 2 and a Mechanicville case in which he said Benadryl and kratom were found in the children's systems.

After the vote

Kratom came back at the end of the meeting, near 2:37, under legislator privilege. Patire spoke about the years he has spent on the issue and suggested the proper authorities should now take it up so the products can be regulated and dispensed properly. The Chair then addressed what she called a misconception directly: that the Legislature acted on the three mothers who spoke September 2. She said that is not correct, that the majority has been researching this for years, and that they do not want to be overreaching but consider the deaths preventable. Anyone arguing that these laws are driven by emotional testimony should expect that answer.

Why the tabling vote matters

Under the county charter, the County Executive has ten days to sign or veto, and an override takes thirteen of nineteen legislators. Eleven members sponsored T-4, two short of an override, and the non-sponsors all voted to delay the law rather than pass it as written. An override is a separate vote from final passage. That is why the request to the County Executive is a veto with a message recommending the State's thresholds: no product above two percent 7-hydroxymitragynine of total alkaloids or one milligram per serving, with every enforcement tool in T-4 kept and aimed at those products. That is the line in S8925-A, now on the Governor's desk, and the line Dutchess County adopted on August 10.

What you can do

- **Watch for the hearing notice.** It will be posted by the County Executive's office. The office number is (518) 270-2900, and the Executive's Office page on [rensco.com](https://www.rensco.com) has a comment form. I will post the date and where to send written comment as soon as I have it.
- **Rensselaer County residents carry the most weight.** If you live in the county, plan to attend and speak. Speak from your own experience, in your own words. Form letters and AI-written comments were noticed and discounted in Dutchess and Oneida.
- **Keep the ask consistent.** Not "no ban," but the State's threshold: ban the concentrated 7-OH products, keep tested natural leaf legal for adults 21 and over.

About the numbers. This rundown was prepared from the county's Facebook livestream and its automatic captions. Roll-call names in auto-captions are unreliable, so individual votes above should be checked against the recording or the official roll call from the Clerk of the Legislature before being quoted. The 15 to 2 result was announced by the Chair. Timestamps in the recording: public comment opens at 0:53:40, the first kratom speaker at 0:55:21, the floor debate at 1:38:40, closing remarks near 2:37. Prepared by Scott Urbin, Hudson Valley Botanicals LLC, Poughkeepsie NY, scott@hudsonvalleybotanicals.com.