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Medicinal pot fails in Iowa

BY **SHAWN GUDE** | MARCH 13, 2009 **7:30 AM**

Jeff Elton can't control his stomach.

The 55-year old Des Moines resident has a nasty medical condition — gastroparesis, or stomach paralysis — that precludes the normal digestion of food.

The only thing that helps his chronic nausea and vomiting?

Marijuana: the safest and most effective anti-nausea drug available, he said.

“I was astounded by the fact that it delivered immediate relief from chronic nausea, with the only side effect being euphoria,” said Elton, who has been prescribed a variety of anti-nausea drugs that he said have ultimately amplified his nausea.

He first tried the drug for medicinal purposes when he was in California, the first state to legalize the substance for ailments.

Iowa is among the overwhelming majority of states that bar the possession or sale of marijuana, whether medical or recreational. Just 13 states have passed laws legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes — none of which border Iowa — according to the nonprofit site ProCon.Org.

Looking to help Iowans such as Elton, Sen. Joe Bolkcom, D-Iowa City, drafted a bill that would lift the ban on marijuana for medical use.

“The bill is essentially an attempt to address the suffering that people are in,” he said, listing cancer and multiple sclerosis as painful diseases that marijuana could potentially ease. “People with severe medical conditions are not being helped by conventional medications. Studies have found that marijuana is an effective treatment.”

The bill failed to pass today's funnel deadline, a procedural rule that requires bills to be reported out of their respective chambers' committees to continue. The Senate isn't in session today.

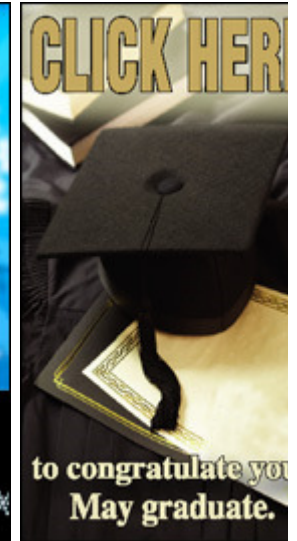
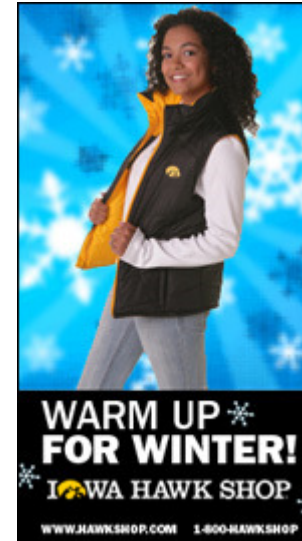
Critics claim legalizing medical marijuana is a slippery slope to full legalization, among other contentions.

Scientific research on the subject is still inconclusive, and contradictory studies abound.

Sen. Merlin Bartz, R-Grafton, said that although he supported the concept, Bolkcom's bill was bereft of “correct checks and balances.” For his part, Bolkcom acknowledged the bill wasn't perfect, but he promised to continue to raise the issue in subsequent years.

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This bill wasn't the only measure that failed to pass today's funnel deadline. Here's a look at the bills that met similar fates, as well as noteworthy measures that passed the procedural hurdle.

Halted bills:

- A Senate measure providing a sales-tax exemption on textbooks for college students never got out of committee, as did several bills in both chambers seeking to limit handheld cell-phone use by drivers.
- A House bill that would have required special elections for a vacant U.S. Senate seat never passed out of its subcommittee. "The response that I heard was: We are not Illinois. We do not need to change this law," said Rep. Mary Gaskill, D-Ottumwa, who headed the measure's subcommittee.
- There were scores of legislators looking to scrap or alter last year's contentious Smoke-Free Air Act, but both Democratic and Republican-sponsored measures were stymied in subcommittee. "People in the health arenas are very nervous about opening up the legislation," Rep. Janet Petersen, D-Des Moines, told the DI earlier this year, noting proponents "might not have the votes to keep the existing law in place."

Bills that made it past the hurdle:

- A Senate bill that would strengthen protections for bicyclists passed the Senate last month and is currently in subcommittee in the House.
- Eligible for debate, a House measure criminalizing Salvia is on the floor.
- A Senate bill lowering the legal blood-alcohol concentration level for boaters from .10 to .08 is in a public-safety subcommittee in the House.
- A House Education Committee-sponsored bill would raise the compulsory age for high-school attendance from 16 to 17. It's currently on the floor.

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[john dorian](#) says:

Friday, March 13, 2009, 7:33:41 AM

I heard about the anti-nausea properties of THC from a friend. I typically have a hard time digesting food in the morning even though my doctor says there is nothing wrong. Having a quick pull from a vaporizer in the morning before breakfast helps me get it down and keep my metabolism up.

I also find it is great for getting nutrition into your body the morning after a night of boozing. As soon as the alcohol is out of your system, have some cannabis and your hangover is over.

Like this comment? [\[yes\]](#) [\[no\]](#)

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[Guest](#) says:

Friday, March 13, 2009, 9:39:56 AM

I say we buy the guy a ticket to California, at tax payer expense, with the condition that he never returns to the state. That's a compromise to me.

Like this comment? [\[yes\]](#) [\[no\]](#) (Score: -4 by 4 votes)

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me says:

Friday, March 13, 2009, 10:04:32 AM

Guest fails to realise that marijuana helps some people with medical conditions. That brainwashed "say no to pot" dushbag is the problem, no a herb that millions of American utilize every day.

Like this comment? [[yes](#)] [[no](#)] (Score: -1 by 1 vote)[reply](#)**me** says:

Friday, March 13, 2009, 10:05:01 AM

I forgot to proof read, fuck!

Like this comment? [[yes](#)] [[no](#)] (Score: -1 by 1 vote)[reply](#)**JB** says:

Friday, March 13, 2009, 11:11:39 AM

The apathetic and ignorant are the ones who oppose cannabis as medicine. To think man made medicine is the only thing we should use only profits the pharmaceutical companies. We see how safe their medicines are every night on the news and commercials.

Like this comment? [[yes](#)] [[no](#)] (Score: 1 by 3 votes)[reply](#)**What?** says:

Saturday, March 14, 2009, 5:44:22 PM

Iowa, you've earned the right to be called backwards. How much more Redneck can people become than to fail to pass the Medical Marijuana bill, this day & age? When parts of the country are talking about and taking steps to legalize it all together! And there is Iowa, still living in the dark ages, allowing people to suffer from lack of medicine...Grow up for Christ Sake and try to think out of the tiny little box you're all trapped in! You should be ashamed of your political contributions to this country.

Like this comment? [[yes](#)] [[no](#)] (Score: 0 by 2 votes)[reply](#)**SB** replies:

Sunday, March 15, 2009, 8:08:44 AM

What? you bone head, by your preceived wisdom then only 13 states out of 50 that are not 'backwards'! Stop smoking that crap and become a productive memeber of soceity instead of insulting our way of life. You want to live in some nightmare state like California then so be it. We choose to make it illegal, you don't like it! Tuff! Stay the fuck out of our business... becuae unlike your pussy CA,(or any other left coast state) we'll knock your fucking skull in... oh by the way.. have agreat day!

Like this comment? [[yes](#)] [[no](#)] (Score: -4 by 4 votes)[reply](#)**Guest** replies:

Sunday, March 15, 2009, 5:21:39 PM

I, for one, can become a lot more redneck....i, let me choose my words carefully....HATE shitheads like you. Believe me, you are the one that needs to grow up and mature. I've seen so many potheads who are now on respirators (that didn't smoke) that it just makes me sad. The post crowd tries to say it doesn't tear up your

lungs, but it DOES. They take oxygen from a tank just like a smoker. Too bad you don't do some PCP laced pot and just drive your car into a river some night...we'd all be the better for it.

Like this comment? [\[yes\]](#) [\[no\]](#) (Score: -2 by 2 votes)

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[RevRayGreen](#) says:

5 days ago, 5:22:43 PM

Attorney general signals shift in marijuana policy
By DEVLIN BARRETT - 1 hour ago

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Eric Holder signaled a change on medical marijuana policy Wednesday, saying federal agents will target marijuana distributors only when they violate both federal and state law.

That would be a departure from the Bush administration, which targeted medical marijuana dispensaries in California even if they complied with that state's law.

"The policy is to go after those people who violate both federal and state law," Holder said in a question-and-answer session with reporters at the Justice Department.

Medical marijuana advocates in California welcomed the news, but said they still worried about the pending cases of those already in court on drug charges.

California law permits the sale of marijuana for medical purposes, though it still is against federal law.

Holder did not spell out exactly who no longer would face the prospect of raids by the Drug Enforcement Administration. But he was quick to add that law enforcement officers will target anyone who tries to "use medical marijuana laws as a shield" for other illegal activity.

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