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Marijuana bill placed on Arizona ballot for medical use

Published: Tuesday, April 20, 2010

Updated: Thursday, April 22, 2010

After much campaigning, the Arizona Medical Marijuana Policy Project (AMMPP) has received enough support and signatures to get a bill on the ballot for this year's November elections.

Representatives of the AMMPP may have approached students on campus in an effort to get signatures in support of legalizing the drug medically. According to Andrew Myers, AMMPP campaign manager, the organization needed 153,365 signatures to comply with state law.

"We have collected about 250,000 signatures right now and we're in the process of cleaning those up and then we're going to submit those to the Secretary of State's office," Myers said, adding, "Once the state certifies that we have enough signatures, they will place us on the ballot for November."

The use of medical marijuana was approved in Arizona in 1996 in Proposition 200 and passed with 65 percent voter approval. The proposition allowed doctors to prescribe marijuana as treatment to relieve pain for seriously and terminally ill patients.

According to medicalmarijuana.procon.org, a non-partisan medical marijuana charity site, "Under federal law, marijuana is considered an illegal drug and physicians are prohibited from writing prescriptions for illegal drugs."

The newest bill will allow doctors to legally prescribe marijuana to patients. It will also allow patients to purchase and use marijuana without harassment from the law.

"There will be a public education proponent to our campaign to try to educate people on the issue," Myers said. "This initiative is about protecting those people from arrest and prosecution."

According to Elizabeth Slauson, botany professor at SCC, marijuana has been used medically for a long time and cannabis remains have been found dating back to 500 B.C.

"It has had a long history of use for pain sedation, especially nausea," Slauson said.

"There have been some studies that have shown that it can be valuable."

One student, however, is not convinced that medical marijuana is the best treatment for illnesses and believes there are better alternatives.

"I'm really reluctant to it," said Lauren Bristow, 23, medical major. "There are so many other ways that you can deal with medical conditions. There are also other things that have been created and that can be created that can be used."

Bristow worries about the long-term effects that marijuana can have on an individual and said that it is not discussed enough.

According to Slauson, "Although its not physically addictive, it has been shown to be somewhat psychologically addictive. It's classified as a hallucinogen and this is why a lot of people don't like it. A hallucinogen is defined as something that alters your perceptions of time and space, which marijuana is known to do."

Myers, however, is not worried about the opposition their campaign faces in the months ahead. He believes the state is ready for a change in its marijuana policy.

"I think that Arizona has supported this measure for going on 15 years now," Myers said. "I think we're finally going to get the law that Arizona residents have clearly indicated their support for in the past."



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