

Monday, July 6, 2009

Debate over marijuana rages on



Jane Glenn Haas
Our Time
Special to the Register

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Reefer Madness! Is marijuana a medical benefit or just a high time for stoners?

And should California – where cannabis is legal for medical use and where dispensaries pay \$100 million in taxes annually – legalize marijuana for everyone's use?

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who's looking for tax money under every rock and tree trunk, says "I think it's time for debate. I think all of those ideas of creating extra revenues – I'm always for an open debate."

Anna Boyce says the governor is blowing smoke. A longtime activist for the medical use of marijuana, Boyce says she's not a full supporter of legalizing the herb.

"Besides, what difference would it make in California? Medical marijuana is not legal nationally and that's where the change has to be made," she says.

The senior activist – she won the Good Character Award from her hometown of Mission Viejo in 2009 – sees this as a senior issue.

Marijuana, derived from the buds and leaves of the cannabis plant, contains more than 400 chemicals, says a report in the magazine "This Week." One of these chemicals, THC, works its way through the bloodstream to the brain, producing a relaxing "high."

The herb is used to treat glaucoma, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and high blood pressure, as well as various AIDS symptoms and chemotherapy.

It can impede short term memory, physical coordination and, like tobacco, contains carcinogens. Federal law says marijuana must be a controlled substance.

Despite the federal restrictions, 14 states have voted to legalize use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, with California the leader in 1996. Today, an estimated 250,000 patients receive cannabis at various dispensaries – 180 in Los Angeles alone. Certain doctors routinely authorize marijuana for their patients.

While she's calling for a national bill, Boyce, a registered nurse, acknowledges it will probably never happen.

"Big pharma will convince people it should not be legalized," she says. "There's no money in it for them. You can grow it in your back yard."

Ah, little wonder this is a political potboiler.

State Sen. Mark Leno has introduced a resolution that urges the U.S. Congress and President Barack Obama's administration to align national policy with the state laws legalizing the herb.

State Assemblyman Tom Ammiano says legalizing marijuana for general use in California could add \$1 billion to the tax coffers. His bill to do that comes up next year.

Meanwhile, the seniors keep on smoking in California.

At a recent Laguna Woods rally for medical marijuana supporters, Margo Bouer, wife of the former mayor, acknowledged she smokes cannabis for relief. She has multiple sclerosis.

"You can't just go out and buy this stuff," Boyce says. "You have to get an [ID card from the state health department](#)."

Smoking cannabis is less harmful than smoking tobacco or drinking alcohol, she insists.

"Yet people shut their eyes and their ears. The refuse to investigate the full range of benefits from this magnificent herb," she says.

"This is not 'reefer madness' and people have to stop thinking that way."

California justices apparently agree with her. On Thursday, a state appeals court ruled medical marijuana growers and patients should be allowed to sue police over illegal raids of their properties.

And one medical marijuana dispenser said earlier in the week he is now making home deliveries to seniors with ID cards allowing them to use cannabis. One of the patients likened ordering the herb to "ordering pizza only better."

What's your comment? For more information, go to [procon.org](#).

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juantomas wrote:

saminca

How many people do you see selling alcohol in schools and parks? There used to be a big problem with that. During alcohol prohibition. Black market vendors have no reason not to sell to minors. Licensed vendors will not sell to underage youth because they don't want to lose their license. Get ready. The country has come to its senses and wants to end the monstrous fraud of marijuana prohibition. With 100 million Americans now having smoked pot, it's as American as apple pie.

7/6/2009 7:12:55 PM

Recommend(5)

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juantomas wrote:

leslee

Wow. It is the very rare marijuana consumer that wants to get high all day. I'm sorry you had such bad luck in your family. 100 million Americans have smoked pot. There are 30 to 50 million current consumers. Of course the vast majority are responsible, occasional consumers, who are hard-working, respected members of their communities and beloved supporters of their families.

Medical marijuana is just one facet of marijuana reform. The end of ALL of the fraudulent prohibition is near also. A majority of Americans now want an end to marijuana arrests.

Marijuana is non-addictive and far less harmful than alcohol. It's time for the Emperor to get a new wardrobe.

7/6/2009 7:01:41 PM

Recommend(3)

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scottdavene wrote:

Marijuana prohibition has been a total failure and is perhaps this country's greatest mistake. Not only has it created criminals out of nearly a third of the country's populace, it costs our society billions of dollars every year, creates a strain on our prison system, and has little or no effect on marijuana use in the US. In some cases, prosecuting marijuana use has turned non-violent, middle class kids into violent and unpredictable, career criminals. Once a person has a criminal conviction on their record, they are far less likely to find a good job and become a useful member of society. Other countries with more liberal drug laws have much lower rates of drug addiction among their people. I invite you to my web-page devoted to raising awareness on the assault on our civil liberties: <http://freethegods.blogspot.com/>

7/6/2009 5:08:03 PM

Recommend(6)

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saminca wrote:

ab390yes is wrong that adults will use pot in place of alcohol. 98% of users also use alcohol. It is not either/or but both. However, most alcohol users don't use pot. And it is not true to say that legalization won't affect children as far more teens use alcohol than pot. Being illegal does deter use. As for nobrainer, he has no brains as pot is illegal for everyone--there is no special class except for medical marijuana, which should go through the FDA rather than be voted on. The marijuana lobby is using medical marijuana as a stage to push legalization. I voted for Prop 215 thinking it was for seriously ill people, not for young healthy people who just want to get high. I'd vote no today.

7/6/2009 4:28:33 PM

Recommend(1)

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ab390yes wrote:

Our current marijuana laws are impossible to enforce. Despite decades of marijuana eradication and despite arresting 800,000 people a year, pot is still easier to buy for most high school kids than beer.

Keeping marijuana illegal does not benefit our children. It benefits special interest groups: drug cartels, the prison industry, police departments, and government bureaucracies.

It is immoral to prevent responsible adults from choosing to use a less harmful substance in place of alcohol. If pot were legalized, alcohol use would decrease along with its associated social costs.

If you want marijuana to be legalized, taxed, and regulated for adults, YOU can make it happen. Tell your legislators to support California Assembly Bill 390. It's easy. Visit yes390.org

7/6/2009 1:10:32 PM

Recommend(8)

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todd432 wrote:

The time has come for the Prohibition of Marijuana to end. I believe the American public will end this issue soon during the next elections. People and times have changed.

7/6/2009 12:12:25 PM

Recommend(6)

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nobrainer123ok wrote:

Bottom Line History Lesson: The concept of any prohibition comes from the definition of a sumptuary law. A sumptuary law attempts to control and divide people into classes by limiting the desires of those considered the lesser class. Generally monarch type governments use sumptuary laws to inflict class separation through prohibiting the lesser class from participating in something reserved strictly by the so called upper class royalty.

Any 21st century 4th grade student understands this country was founded on the principles of individual freedoms." A Prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded." -Abraham Lincoln U.S. President. These same people pushing prohibition would be targeted for treason investigation had they been around during the founding of our country! Don't Be Fooled American people any prohibition enforcement against us is as UN-AMERICAN as Hitler!!

7/6/2009 11:07:22 AM

Recommend(10)

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leslee5 wrote:

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