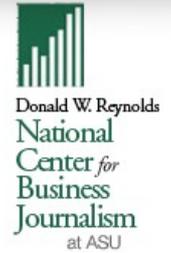


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Who's profiting from medical marijuana in your market?

1

By Melissa Preddy on Jul 22, 2010 in Beats, Economy, Featured, Health care, Small | Private | Non-profit, Story ideas Like 9

Drug enforcement choppers for Operation Hemp spotted **500 marijuana plants** yesterday in a rural Michigan community right near me. Of course, that's chump change compared to the **300,000 pot plants authorities have snuffed out** this month in California's Shasta County, where lawbreakers have been putting state park land to interesting agricultural uses.



By Flickr user Laurie Avocado

Still, the notion of a major pot bust is starting to seem increasingly quaint, as legal medical marijuana catches on nationwide and most polls find more than half of voters favor decriminalizing the recreational use of the weed, as well. The Justice Department has thrown in the towel when it comes to applying **federal sanctions to medical users**. There even was a (failed) bill in Congress last year, amusingly titled the **Act to Remove Federal Penalties for Personal Use of Marijuana by Responsible Adults**.

And this fall, **California voters will decide whether to legalize pot smoking for all**, with an eye on tax revenue that might help bail out the state's dire fiscal situation.

Point being, the vibe seems right for a look at the financial ripple effects of the legal marijuana industry. Be forewarned, there are a lot of legal grey areas in regard to profits, taxation and who's permitted to do what.

If you're in one of the 14 states that allow medical marijuana, you've probably read or done some features on the growers. If not, here's a great **example from Bozeman, Montana**.

But what about ancillary businesses, like the cottage industry of medical advisers that seems to have sprung up here in Michigan, offering speedy assistance to people trying to get a state application approved. Local ones include the **Michigan Weed Clinic** a.k.a Michigan Mobile Marihuana Certifications PPLC ("Get the certification you deserve without the hassle") and the **Ann Arbor Pot Clinic**. They and their competitors tout quick doctor recommendations for pot use for a fees starting at \$100. Looking into the number of docs who have jumped aboard the marijuana train would make for an interesting business feature or careers story, to say the least.

The legal version of the pot peddler is known as a caregiver. (In most states, since growing and selling marijuana really isn't legal, but smoking it is for people with certain conditions, the patient and/or a 'caregiver' is allowed to cultivate and obtain small amounts.) That seems to have become another cottage industry and even boasts the **National Association of Medical Marijuana Caregivers**. Again, well worth a look at who's in this line of business, how do they make money and what are the risks & benefits for entrepreneurs.

Here's a handy **chart from ProCon.org** that lists the states, related fees, possession limits and other info. And here's a list of states with similar **pending ballot measures**.

Talk to paraphernalia shop owners and online purveyors of marijuana smoking supplies about what they hear from medical users. And a personal finance piece on the ongoing cost of medical pot therapy – from application fees to the price of the product – would be of interest to quite a few readers, no doubt. There also are **insurance issues** and workplace issues – Wal-Mart is the subject of a boycott because it fired a medical marijuana user here in Michigan, even though the man was abiding by state law.



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