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Ron Paul, others to introduce marijuana bill

By Joshua Norman Topics In The News

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(Credit: CBS/Stockphoto)

In early June, a 19-member international panel of luminaries called the so-called "war on drugs" a failure, and recommended the United States consider legalizing marijuana in order to better undermine criminal organizations and stop punishing those who "do no harm to others."

It apparently only took a few weeks for Congress to hear them, as Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.), and Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), along with other congressmen, will be introducing legislation in the House on Thursday to "limit the federal government's role in marijuana enforcement to cross-border or inter-state smuggling," reports Reason.com, which claims to have gotten its information from the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP.)

Major panel: Drug war has failed, legalize pot
 After 40 years, is war on drugs worth fighting?
 CBSNews.com special report: Marijuana Nation

The bill is not an attempt to legalize pot, the authors insist, but is instead intended to clear up the conflicts between federal and state law that exist throughout the country. As many as 16 states currently allow the use of medical marijuana, an allowance that falls into direct conflict with federal law.

According to the MPP: "Rep. Frank's legislation would end state/federal conflicts over marijuana policy, reprioritize federal resources, and provide more room for states to do what is best for their own citizens."

While GOP presidential candidate Paul and the very liberal Frank might seem an odd pair, this legislation is right up Paul's libertarian alley, as it focuses on allowing states to do what they want without interference from Washington, D.C.

The legislation is co-sponsored by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.), Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.), and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Oakland).

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While some, including the MPP and [The Los Angeles Times](#), claim it is the first legislation of its kind to be proposed in Congress that would end the 73-year-old federal marijuana prohibition that began with the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, there have been other marijuana-related bills in Congress in recent years.

In fact, Rep. Frank himself introduced as many as two marijuana-related bills in 2009 alone, both of which appear to have died in subcommittee and never even been considered for a vote. [H.R. 2835](#) sought to "provide for the medical use of marijuana in accordance with the laws of the various States." [H.R. 2943](#) sought to "eliminate most Federal penalties for possession of marijuana for personal use, and for other purposes."

While it is very likely the current piece of marijuana legislation will end up in the same place as Frank's previous two efforts, it is still part of a growing chorus of voices seeking to alter the debate on the war on drugs. With the U.S. spending \$15 billion per year on the war on drugs, and with little to no apparent gains made in the last 40 years since it started, theirs will surely not be the last prominent voices to question why marijuana is illegal.

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