

Casper Star Tribune of September 12, 2015: “Why import what we can grow right here?”

WTE of September 16, 2015: “Get the facts on medical pot”

Wyoming NORML wants to afford Wyomingites the opportunity to vote on whether to have medical marijuana available to individuals whose doctors determine that the substance could help improve these patients’ quality of life. The Peggy A. Kelley Wyoming Cannabis Act of 2016 would ask voters to approve the cultivation of hemp also.

Readers of my column are aware that I am a proponent of agricultural hemp production; indeed, once it’s legal to do so in Wyoming, I plan to raise hemp on my own farmland—it is grown in more than 20 states around the nation. Further, inasmuch as prescription-use of CBD oil was approved by the Wyoming legislature in this year’s session, I hope to initiate an industry that produces the substance, which is derived from hemp leaves. Why import from Colorado or, worse, Canada, what Wyoming farmers can grow right here?

CBD oil should not be confused with hemp oil. The latter is pressed from hemp seed, just as corn oil is derived from corn kernels. Corn production, however, requires prodigious amounts of water, fertilizer, and pesticides. Hence, it is environmentally expensive. Hemp production is devoid of these requirements.

Many readers also know my stance on medical marijuana, which has been proven effective in the treatment of glaucoma and other ailments. I’m among the more than three hundred sponsors who gather the signatures required to place the measure on next year’s ballot. We are confident that, once the decision is left to the voters, the Wyoming Cannabis Act will pass.

For the past weeks I’ve been knocking on the doors of friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. Sometimes I get astounding reactions. “I can’t sign this!” a respondent recently said. “Stoners cause auto accidents.”

Not true. Drunk drivers cause auto accidents—and pot does not get people drunk. It will get you mellow, as a Wyoming deputy sheriff explained, speaking at a Lions Park (Kiwanis House) meeting shortly after Colorado approved recreational marijuana.

A stopped motorist might greet him with a friendly, “Hi, Officer! How’s it hangin’?” the speaker said.

Nevertheless, the Wyoming Association of the Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police opposes the efforts of Wyoming NORML, vowing to undertake an “educational” campaign that’s sure to warn of dire consequences. Coached long ago by the Department of Drug Administration, the officers have yet to acquaint themselves with the facts; indeed, the association disavows any need to do so. The DEA’s website contains the picture of a car wreck its headline states was due to pot use. If you read the fine print, you’ll learn the driver was intoxicated with alcohol, though he had used pot as well.

What are we to make, though, of the Wyoming Medical Society’s opposition? Surely every physician is aware that marijuana is far less dangerous than alcohol, and that the DEA’s mislabeling the substance as a Schedule 1 drug is deliberately misleading. Besides, the WMS statement does acknowledge the effectiveness of certain marijuana treatments. While it’s true that studies show pot’s detrimental effects on the adolescent brain, the same holds true for alcohol abuse. Proponents agree that cannabis use must be regulated like alcohol and cigarettes.

“We got brainwashed in the seventies,” commented Janet Cunningham, another sponsor. “I was, too. We were told that smoking pot would bring hell and damnation.”

Yet marijuana was used for medical purposes thousand of years before federal agencies

assigned these matters into their jurisdictions. It's common knowledge that Big Pharma spends big to keep from having to compete with the lowly weed. Some people react badly to synthetic drugs; yes, even in Wyoming.

The WMS calling for more studies is sheer waffling. The studies have been done, by the federal government, no less, which grows its own pot. Indeed, for the past three decades, a handful of Americans have been getting regular deliveries of marijuana, courtesy of Uncle Sam. These individuals are part of the Compassionate Investigational New Drug program, an initiative that grew out of a 1976 court decision, which created the nation's first legal pot smokers. Of the 14 people who were in the program, four are still living and receiving regular government shipments of pot.

Naturally, the subsequent War on Drugs demolished the INDS program; still, the four remaining recipients are evidence of governmental double-speak. That physicians endorse this state of affairs is sheer cynicism.

Signing the petition does not mean shelving misgivings over the potential abuse of marijuana. I, too, hold these concerns. Still, if you wish to add our signature, you'll find me Sundays between 11:35 AM and noon in the Social Hall of Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne, located on 3305 Thomes Avenue. I'll be wearing a nametag.

Need to find a sponsor in another city? Go to the website of Wyoming NORML or send me an email request.