

Dear Long Beach Mayor and City Council,

1-10-12

UB-15

RE: MEDICAL MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES – Green Ribbon Task Force

Like it or not, the tide has turned dramatically on the use of marijuana—medical or otherwise. Credible news outlets and internet sources are exposing the despotic governmental suppression of scientific studies that have heartening promise in hemp and cannabis-based applications. As the citizenry becomes better educated, their enlightenment defines itself at the polls.

In the last election, California Prop 19 legalizing marijuana lost by a slim margin. This was in large part because of the intense propagandizing and fear mongering of the pharmaceuticals, prison guard unions (vested in jobs) and tobacco companies—just follow the \$\$\$\$\$. In Long Beach City, it handily won. Presidential candidate Ron Paul's approval rate is gaining exponentially due to his irresistible stance on lessening governmental interference on private lives.

As we speak, several initiatives are gathering momentum and signatures to legalize marijuana. They have gained popularity especially in the light of city officials, police, prosecutors, and even judges ignoring the will of the people as in California Proposition 215. Called the Compassionate Use Act, Prop 215 sought to facilitate people who need marijuana as medicine. According to its provisions, the State should have stepped up to the plate in providing patients with the herbal medicine that eases their suffering.

The dispensaries have filled in where the State has negligently and sorrowfully failed. In many cases, it is not practical or possible for sick/disabled people to grow their own. More than likely, a ban on dispensaries would only drive these vulnerable citizens to the streets and put them at extreme risk buying from drug dealers. The product may be laced with an addictive substance or may be tainted with deadly molds or other pathogens that would be especially devastating to those with immune-compromised illnesses such as AIDS.

Forcing them to buy from gang-affiliated dispensers would only fund and enable larger and more powerful cartels. This predictably results in more crime and turf wars where innocent bystanders may be gunned down. With an already-drained police department and a dramatic spike in shootings over the past few months, is empowering gangs/cartels a wise path to follow?

It is imperative that this City Council find a viable alternative to outright banning of medical marijuana dispensaries, not only for the patients that use this medicine now but for all citizens that may one day need it to treat their pain and/or medical condition. Death is a certainty of life; suffering is often a choice. While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) stance on this subject is pending, the spirit of the ADA should not be undermined by draconian political decisions.

This is a golden opportunity for the Council to appoint a community-based "Green-Ribbon" Task Force to create a more democratically-generated solution. This committee should include representatives from the City and the citizenry. The purpose/mission of this assemblage should be to craft a more equitable ordinance that sensibly regulates medical marijuana dispensaries and allows reasonable access/accommodation to the sick and disabled.

This committee should include a representative from the Health Department (Michael Johnson?)--where this matter belongs, Police Department (Commander Josef Levy?), City Attorney (Michael Mais?), Prosecutor, Finance Department (not Eric Sund), patient advocates (Diana Lejins, Advocates for Disability Rights/Bill Britt, Association of Patient Advocates?), dispensary representatives (Carl Kemp/Rich Brizendine?), Science/Environment/Neighborhoods (Joan Greenwood?), and whatever affiliates that the Council deems appropriate. While I believe that the above names would be beneficial because of their experience/expertise, they are only suggestions. A time period of 90 days would be reasonable.

In the interim, a partial ban that would only apply to new dispensaries might be more sensible course of action. Those dispensaries already in existence would be well advised to adhere as much as possible to the regulations set forth in previous legislation until Council has taken action on a newer, compliant and enforceable ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,
Advocates for Disability Rights / Past Chair LB Citizens Advisory Commission on Disabilities

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