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From: Senator Daylin Leach <DLEACH@pasenate.com>
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2013 12:54 PM
To: Leach, Daylin
Subject: Marijuana Co-Sponsorship Memo

CO-Sponsorship Memo

To: All Senators

From: Senator Daylin Leach

Date: January 4, 2012

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Dear Colleague

For the past 75 years, we have been waging a "war on drugs" that includes treating the possession and use of small amounts of Marijuana as a matter for the criminal justice system. We have spent billions of dollars investigating, prosecuting, incarcerating and monitoring millions of our fellow-citizens who have hurt nobody, damaged no property, breached no peace. Their only "crime" was smoking a plant which made them feel a bit giddy.

People across our Commonwealth have spent time in prison, lost time at work, been forced to hire lawyers and had their lives disrupted and sometimes destroyed because they used a product less dangerous than beer, less risky than children's cough-syrup and less addictive than chocolate. They used a product which has never killed anybody, and whose societal harm comes from its prohibition rather than its properties.

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, in 2006, an average year, 24,685 marijuana arrests were made in Pennsylvania, at a cost of 325.36 million dollars. Each year we not only spend a similar amount, we leave several hundred million dollars on the table in taxes that we do not collect because marijuana is illegal, rather than regulated and taxed. Aside from the moral issues involved, we simply can no longer afford the financial costs of prohibition.

Further, prohibition has done what it did in the case of alcohol in the 30s. It has created a violent and bloody black market. Prohibition in the last century gave us turf wars between bootleggers and the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Prohibition today is a direct cause of bloody turf wars between drug cartels that are killing so many people in our country and elsewhere. The black-market violence associated with alcohol ended with the end of prohibition. The same will be true of Marijuana.

Our foolish, ill-conceived, costly and destructive policy must end. That is why I will shortly be introducing legislation removing the possession, use, and regulated sale of Marijuana from the purview of our state's criminal justice system. This bill will legalize the consumption of marijuana for adults, without regard to the purpose of that consumption.

To be clear, under the terms of this legislation, Marijuana would be a regulated product, treated in a way similar to how alcohol is treated. It will be sold legally only in either State Stores or Beer Distributors. Further, the following will still be illegal under this law:

= The operation of motor vehicles under the influence of Marijuana, "under the influence" being defined as having a blood level of Marijuana already illegal under current law for operating a motor vehicle.

= The possession of Marijuana by persons under the age of 21 and the sale or conveyance of Marijuana by adults to minors.

= It will be illegal to resell Marijuana, as it is illegal to resell alcohol in Pennsylvania today.

= The use of Marijuana in public will be prohibited to the extent that the use of alcohol is prohibited in public

= The legislation specifically provides that employers and others may prohibit the use of Marijuana on their property.

Over the past few years, 19 states have legalized medicinal marijuana. Some states have very strict regimes, in others, such as California this has resulted in de facto legalization. Just this past November, 2 additional states, Washington and Colorado, voted to legalize marijuana. It is time for Pennsylvania to be a leader in jettisoning this modern-day prohibition, and ending a policy that has been so destructive, costly, and anti-scientific.

If you are interested in supporting this legislation, please reply to this E-mail, or contact Samantha Shrauder at SSruader@pasenate.com or 717-787-5544.

Senator Daylin Leach
17th Senatorial District

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