



TO: Southern Oregon Legislative Delegation
FROM: Chief Tim George
City of Medford Police Department
DATE: February 8, 2014
RE: Marijuana Issues

The City of Medford believes that HB 3460 (2013) allowed local decision-making as to the siting and business licensing for medical marijuana dispensaries. Because every local government has different challenges when it comes to public safety, the assurance that we could make assessments about our local area, taking into account citizen input, was vital to our acceptance of the legislation.

SB 1531 reaffirms the City of Medford's ability to respond to our constituent needs and our community safety.

As you know, the City of Medford's response to HB 3460 was to maintain the current stance of only issuing a business license, or allowing a business license to continue, if it is not in violation of local, county, state or federal law. This was a modification that was unanimously approved by the Medford City Council. Operating a marijuana dispensary would be a violation of Federal law. The local control we are exercising is the right thing to do to protect our community.

Being from Southern Oregon, you are well aware that the cultivation of marijuana is different here. Our outdoor grow cycle is more than 6 months long. That means our law enforcement has more challenges on the illegal distribution of marijuana than many other cities in Oregon. In addition, the result of our region's large crops is that more marijuana goes to a plethora of dispensaries in a limited area. With over 7,200 medical marijuana cardholders in Jackson County (that is a ratio of 28 residents per marijuana card), the ability to monitor the number of dispensaries to meet their needs and sell "extra product" will be overwhelming for public safety. We must have the ability to control where these dispensaries are located. Under the law, we cannot control home-grows nor can we control cultivation, but we should be allowed to control consistent sales locations.

The Governor keeps talking about "tight-loose" in his school reform efforts, meaning the state sets tight standards but is loose in that they let local districts figure out rules for getting there. This should apply in marijuana regulation too. The state says medical marijuana is allowed, but the locals decide to what extent. Same concept applies to Indian tribes - since gambling is allowed in this state, they get to decide which aspects to allow. Why aren't local governments entitled to the same ability to respond to local needs within statewide parameters as schools and tribes?

We here in Southern Oregon have to brace for the worst based on what currently happens to us in the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program world. It is not one size fits all. This is why we believe

local control is so important and why the 9th Circuit agreed with the right of local entities to regulate medical marijuana.

The Legislative Counsel opinion combining SB 863 and HB 3460 to determine there can be no local control of medical marijuana distribution is ridiculous. We ask that you allow the intent of HB 3460 to stand by itself – do not let GMO law in SB 863 be applied to this kind of “seed.” The extrapolation of the intent and merger of issue leading to justification of local preemption is huge stretch. SB 1531 merely confirms what the intent of dispensary law was all along – allowing citizens to decide what makes their community livable and safe.

Please support SB 1531 and allow your local law enforcement, your city leaders and your constituents to decide what works best for Southern Oregon.

On a final note, SB 1556, the first step to legalizing marijuana for all, should be opposed. How is the State going to protect minors from more marijuana in the marketplace? Oregon is far from adequately enforcing just the medical marijuana program. Legalization of marijuana will exponentially increase the problems of resulting substance abuse, and related crimes to which we must respond. The State has done a horrible job of regulating and enforcing the OMMP and the idea that Oregon will regulate marijuana even further once legalization happens is absurd. We have counties in Southern Oregon going bankrupt and unable to handle current 911 calls. How can they possibly add on regulation of marijuana and responding to related offenses? The Oregon State Police has some 350 fewer Troopers on the road today than they did 15 years ago, so adding a proven catalyst to crime into the mix statewide is an incredible detrimental idea. Oregon is better than this. We just need to say no to SB 1556, and no to the consequences that come with such legalization.