

A Piece of the Rock For Gays and Lesbians

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Medical Marijuana Bill Proposed in Congress

New DEA Head Likely To Oppose It

By Mike James

Texas Republican Ron Paul has joined Massachusetts Democrat Barney Frank to reintroduce bipartisan legislation providing for the use of medicinal marijuana by seriously ill patients.

The Frank-Paul bill reschedules marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule II under federal law so that physicians may legally prescribe it under controlled circumstances. It also permits state legislatures that wish to establish medical marijuana distribution systems the legal authority to do so.

The National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws, led by Keith Stroup, calls the proposal a streamlined effort to get medicinal marijuana to those who need it. "Historically, voters and state legislatures have been more receptive to this issue than the federal government. This legislation addresses this paradigm and effectively gets the government out of the way of those states that wish to regulate marijuana as a medicine."

Stroup said that he welcomed Congressman Paul's decision to co-sponsor the bill. "Providing an effective medicine to those seriously ill patients that need it is neither a Democrat nor Republican issue," he says. "It should be the goal of legislators from both political parties."

Since 1996, nine states - Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, Oregon and Washington - have enacted laws allowing patients to possess and use marijuana medicinally under

a doctor's supervision. In March, the Supreme Court ruled that federal law forbids the manufacture and distribution of marijuana for medical purposes, but did not decide on whether individual patients may legally use marijuana in states authorizing its use.

Meanwhile, Representative Asa Hutchinson (R-Ark.), Bush's pick to head the Drug Enforcement Administration, refused to answer questions at Tuesday's Senate confirmation hearing regarding whether he will encourage federal authorities to prosecute medical marijuana providers and patients.

Marijuana is "illegal; it is harmful and there's many potential dangers," Hutchinson said, although he did not reveal if he intended to enforce federal laws outlawing the herb in those states that have approved its use medically.

Hutchinson is a former Arkansas prosecutor and is serving his third term in Congress. Hutchinson also claimed that "the scientific community does not support the medical uses of it."

Responded Norm Kent, the *Express* Publisher and a member of the National Board of Directors of NORML: "Hutchinson is absolutely incorrect. A 1999 Institute of Medicine study on medicinal marijuana found, and I quote from it 'Scientific data indicate the potential therapeutic value of cannabinoid drugs ... for nausea, vomiting, and appetite stimulation' Kent noted.

"Ultimately, the adverse effects of marijuana use are within the range tolerated for other medications," Kent stated.

Republicans Stand Firm

*Remain Neutral on Broward Rights Ordinance;
AFE/Empower Broward Seeking Volunteers*

By Mike James

On Monday, July 16th, members of the Broward County Republican Executive Committee (BREC) met and passed two resolutions concerning the controversial public funding of the Boy Scouts of America and the petition drive calling for the removal of 'sexual orientation' from the county's Human Rights Ordinance.

BREC first supported public funding for the Boy Scouts and second, they resolved not to endorse the Equal Rights Not Special Rights (ERNSR) Political Action Committee (PAC) petition drive.

The Committee decided to remain neutral and leave the decision to sign, or decline to sign, up to the individual residents of Broward County.

Alvin Entin, the GOP's legal counsel stressed at the meeting, "We have not endorsed homosexuals. We haven't endorsed gay Scoutmasters. We just said it is a matter of individual decision."

Jack Majeske, President of the Broward County Log Cabin Club stressed, "While I and others aren't candidates for political office, jobs and/or appointments, our participation affirms the right of inclusion and reinforces our desire to reelect Jeb Bush regardless of the muddled mess we've been exposed to these last few weeks."

Although a number of guests were dissatisfied with Majeske's views and subsequently booed him, the members of the Executive Committee were professional and promptly began mending fences and building unity once the gathering ended.

Earlier this year, at a board meeting of the Dolphin Democratic Club, members passed a resolution endorsing Americans For Equality: Empower Broward (AFE) and

the Decline To Sign campaign. Decline to Sign is AFE's response to ERNSR's petition drive.

On Wednesday, July 18, AFE met in the main hall of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center (GLCC) to seek assistance in the newest phase of their campaign. They are seeking volunteers to go door to door in different areas of the county to distribute literature.

Richard Giorgio, AFE's Political Consultant stated, "These areas have been targeted because of their high voter turn out." He went on to say, "We are not looking for people to go out and discuss the issue, but to distribute literature in an effort to educate voters." Look for AFE at the August 3 street fair in downtown Hollywood.

Jim Woodward, Vice Chair of Community Outreach of AFE said, "The efforts of [ERNSR] can and must be defeated. They need to learn that the people of Broward County will not tolerate discrimination in any form."

AFE representatives stated that they are "putting pressure on the Boy Scouts to force Equal Rights Not Special Rights to stop using their name in their campaign."

However, Jeffrie Herrmann, a scouting executive of the South Florida Council of the Boy Scouts of America, already stated earlier this year, "[ERNSR] is not part of the Boy Scouts, nor are we endorsing them. We want to distance ourselves from them and I have notified them that they do not have permission to use our logo."

Over 60,000 signatures are required to place ERNSR's agenda on the ballot of the next election and they now have less than 60 days to obtain the remaining signatures. ERNSR is unwilling to state how many signatures they have obtained thus far.