

## Suffer in silence

Originally published May 03, 2010

[http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/archives/display\\_detail.htm?StoryID=110826](http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/archives/display_detail.htm?StoryID=110826)

By: Hardy R. Stone Jr.

Before bees get in your bonnet, nobody's talking about legalization here.

While our lawmakers enjoy a break from Annapolis, let's reflect on a bill the House of Delegates let die in committee last session. The medical marijuana bill didn't make it to the House floor for debate. It (SB 627) sailed through the Senate, passing with a landslide 35-12 bipartisan vote with no floor objections or discussion. The bill would make it easier for Marylanders with severe and debilitating health conditions to obtain marijuana as pain medication.

But the House of Delegates' bill (HB 712), almost identical to SB 627, was sent to two House committees for chop-ups with only days left in the legislative session -- giving it no chance to advance through the legislative process.

Under current Maryland law, marijuana used for medicinal purposes can be used as a defense in court if patients are charged with possession, but a \$100 fine is normally imposed on them. Sen. David Brinkley, R-Frederick/Carroll, remarked: "As a cancer survivor, I feel that it shouldn't be the policy of this or any other state to arrest, prosecute or imprison a person who uses marijuana under a doctor's advice to alleviate pain and suffering."

Summarizing the Senate bill:

Only patients with specified medical conditions would be eligible for the medication; marijuana dispensaries would be licensed by the state; the departments of Agriculture and Health and Mental Hygiene would monitor production and distribution; and the medication could be prescribed only to patients who've had a long-term relationship with their treating physician. Physicians would be evaluated as suitable to prescribe the medication.

Many Fredericktonians openly support medical marijuana, some are totally against it, and others privately see its value for people with painful, debilitating, permanent health conditions. This is a controversial issue, but let's not kid ourselves. Pot has been pervasive all our lives, and many people have used it, especially baby boomers. National leaders admit to experimenting in their younger days. I'm told that marijuana is effective for pain relief. I don't know -- I didn't inhale.

The government tried to stop the spread in America with clownish propaganda like the 1938 film "Reefer Madness" and an endless parade of government-financed scare tactics. Possession of pot is part of America's dark underbelly -- it's ranked a Schedule I narcotic by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration while cocaine is Schedule II. Ever hear of an overdose of pot? Government expenditures for prosecutions and other judicial proceedings are phenomenal for marijuana, sucking millions in taxpayer dollars. (Tea Partiers, unite!)

Some of the pain reliever would trickle down to Maryland city streets into the hands of youth. C'mon ...

that happens with whiskey, wine and beer. There's a black market for anything illegal.

If medical marijuana were legalized, those very few who find relief from serious pain won't be criminals, won't need to buy it on the street from questionable people, and won't need to worry about buying marijuana that may be harmful or deadly.

Brinkley added: "Would you call the police on a family member who confided in you that they were using marijuana under a doctor's order to ease their suffering from cancer or MS?"

Nobody's talking about total legalization. American society won't ever go that far.

Believe it, there are many Marylanders who hope Brinkley introduces the bill again next session.

... in times like these ...

Bluepoint1@comcast.net