

2004 A² City Draft M M Campaign

Why should we pass a Medical Marijuana City Charter amendment in Ann Arbor?

We should do it because it is morally right for two reasons: to show compassion to sick people who need relief from suffering, and to affirm American values.

To assert that Marijuana (Cannabis) is not medicine is like saying water is not wet. Cannabis is one of the earliest known medicinal herbs, used by humans since prehistory. Cannabis was prominently featured in the oldest known Pharmacopoeia, produced in China around 2300 B.C.. It is prescribed in both Ayurvedic (Indian) and early Arabic medical texts.

From ancient Rome we find the use of medical cannabis in the writing of Dioscorides, Pliny the Elder, and Galen. It was often used for arthritis.

Cannabis was common in the holy land. When the fourth century remains of a Hebrew girl who died in childbirth were excavated in 1993, it was found that her caretakers had been burning cannabis beside her.

A British doctor stationed in India brought cannabis back to western medicine around 1850. Dr. William O'Shaughnessy showed that it could relieve pain and end convulsions, reducing even the major muscle spasms of rabies and tetanus. O'Shaughnessy observed that when cannabis could not save a life it still could "strew the path to the grave with flowers".

Queen Victoria of Great Britain used cannabis for decades. Her physician, Dr. John Russell Reynolds, prescribed it for menstrual cramps, migraines, and insomnia, among other things. Dr. Roberts referred to Cannabis as "one of the most valuable medicines we possess".

When Abraham Lincoln was shot, his wife was given Cannabis for her nerves.

The authoritative report of the British Indian Hemp Commission (1894) "clearly established that the occasional use of hemp in moderate doses has been beneficial,... this use may be regarded as medical in character".

It is very important to realize that cannabis medicine has already been massively used in the USA, and it worked well! Between 1850 and 1900 cannabis was probably the most common ingredient in American medicine. Tincture of Cannabis (an alcohol extract) was used to help the tiniest infants and the oldest grannies. Nobody was harmed or complained of being too high! How can anyone say that cannabis medicine could be harmful in the USA when our ancestors used it so extensively? Cannabis went out of favor because dosages were hard to standardize and new products such as aspirin, morphine, and hypodermic needles became popular.

Doctors nonetheless knew that cannabis must remain available as medicine because there were some cases, just as today, when nothing else worked. The American Medical Association testified forcefully against the effort of the federal government to outlaw cannabis medicine as part of the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937. Doctors wanted it to be evaluated by modern science.

The AMA spokesman argued so skillfully against outlawing Marijuana as medicine that he was chastised for being unhelpful during the hearings before the House of Representatives. He asked why the bill had been prepared in secret for two years with no doctors being informed. The full House passed the bill in two minutes, members showed little awareness of what they were doing. Congressmen had one question; they wanted to know the position of the AMA. Congressman Fred Vinson lied that the bill had

the full support of the American Medical Association. He was later promoted to the Supreme Court.

AMA support for medical cannabis lasted until the Bureau of Narcotics began arresting thousands of doctors for drug law violations. In 1939 the AMA "saw the light" and joined the "reefer madness". Only three doctors were charged for illegal prescriptions during the following decade.

Ancient texts, records from the nineteenth century, and modern medicine all list symptoms that can be mitigated with cannabis.

Modern medical use of cannabis is best understood involving issues of eating. If you have cancer or AIDS and cannot keep food down you will quickly lose strength, waste away, and die. With medical marijuana you can keep food down and may gain the strength to handle heavier chemotherapy and medications. Cannabis may help you live long enough for your treatment to save you and may improve your quality of life.

Dr. Lester Grinspoon, emeritus professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is our nation's most persuasive advocate of medical marihuana. It is worth examining the roots of his conviction.

Grinspoon's beloved 14 year old son Danny was dying of leukemia. Danny was horribly sickened and demoralized by his chemotherapy. When someone recommended marijuana for Danny, Dr. Grinspoon would not hear of it. His wife, however, took matters into her own hands.

The next time Dr. Grinspoon drove his son to a "chemo" appointment he noticed that Danny didn't show his usual terror, he seemed happy. The treatment went well, and on the way home Danny asked if they could stop and get a "sub" sandwich. Following his previous treatments Danny had not eaten and had vomited for days; (people sometimes break ribs from the force of their vomiting convulsions). Cannabis greatly improved Danny's last days. Before he died Danny said "Pot turns bad things into good". That was enough for Dr. Grinspoon, who soon became our nations leading authority on "marijuana" (see "Marihuana Reconsidered" 1971 and 1994, dedicated to Danny).

Does this discovery have to happen within each family to get us to understand? Now, in 2004, many families do have stories of loved ones who have been helped by medical cannabis. Our sick loved ones must not have the threat of arrest hanging over them. One quarter of us will die of cancer; we need the best treatment available.

Cannabis can treat the pain and tremor (shakiness) of multiple sclerosis (MS). A quick test can show an amazing decrease in tremor. Ask a patient with serious MS to write their name, ingest cannabis, and then write their name again after the medicine has taken effect. Compare the two signatures (Grinspoon and Bakalar, 1993, p. 76).

A model of MS used in laboratory rat studies is called Experimental Autoimmune Encephalitis. In one study (Lyman et. al. 1974) with no treatment 98% of rats died; with treatment by THC (the major active chemical in cannabis) 5% of rats died, and survivors had much healthier brains. Breakthrough studies showing hugely promising medical effects usually stimulate more research. If the effective medication is cannabis, however, promising research is swept under the rug and funding cut off.

Pain is treatable with Cannabis, which has been proven in animal studies. How can we smugly sentence people to life in the purgatory of pain on the basis of cultural prejudice? Thankfully most of us will never come near to experiencing the agony that many injured and sick people feel during every waking moment. Does this mean we

should turn our backs to them – or pompously tell them how *we* think they should deal with pain? Cannabis can manage some pain alone, but can never replace the opiates - which must be supplied as needed for serious pain. Cannabis and opiates can be combined to manage pain more completely and safely. By using different receptors; different neural pathways than the opiates, cannabis can improve pain control (for arthritis, cancer, and AIDS for instance).

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in humans. Cannabis effectively and cheaply relieves excess intraocular pressure – the cause of Glaucoma. Medications have now been invented which may be as effective. They are costly and produce side effects such as depression and heart problems.

Cannabis is often effective in treating insomnia, anxiety, Tourette 's syndrome, migraine headaches, menstrual cramps, spasticity and seizures, muscle spasm in paraplegia and quadriplegia, and “phantom limb” syndrome following amputation. It is effective for some (but not all) people who suffer from depression and from epilepsy.

Cannabis is a bronchodilator (the opposite of tobacco). It can stop an asthma attack – although smoking may not be the best method of administration for treating asthma.

Cannabis has been successfully used in the treatment of addiction and withdrawal symptoms for well over a century.

Many maladies often classified as “psychosomatic” or “emotional” can be controlled with cannabis, including a range of skin diseases. Psychological conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder can often be brought under control with nearly miraculous alacrity, sometimes enabling families to stay together. Aggression and irritability often melt away when cannabis is used. It is vastly harder to get in the mood to kick the dog, scream at your kids and beat up your wife if a smile is stuck across your face. Cannabis can make Siamese fighting fish stop fighting! It may help with many stress based physical and mental ailments.

Cannabis may help with such an array of symptoms that you can't know if it will help you until you try it. This is why there is no list of qualifying diseases in the proposed Ann Arbor city charter amendment on medical marijuana. Our point is that doctors and patients must be in control of medical care, not the federal government.

My own medical problem (1967/68) was stomach pain that was terrible, omnipresent, and ever increasing. I finally became convinced that I would be unable to put up with it much longer. Doctor after doctor gave me piles of tranquilizers, barbiturates, and antacids as the pain always grew. Then a young woman brought me cannabis. A couple of weeks later I knew I was going to be all right. I got back into college and graduated magna cum laude.

Many years later I began to repeatedly read that “stomach pain” was one of the most common indications for the use of “tincture of cannabis” during the later 1800's. How outrageous! All of us stomach-pain sufferers had been played for fools. I had not known that much of my pain had been a wholly involuntary sacrifice to the altar of political correctness; a century earlier I would have gotten better treatment for my particular problem. (There were no “acid blocker” drugs yet in 1968)

Pain treatment was also not as difficult a century ago. Doctors provided plant based medicine (morphine) as needed. In our modern day patients are often sentenced to

live and die in savage pain. The federal government will attack doctors who adequately treat pain, removing their license to practice medicine and threatening them with prison.

If the American federal government respected the rulings of its own judges, medical marijuana would have been legal long ago. After an inexcusable 16 year delay a judge hand picked by the Drug Enforcement Administration issued his final decision on September 6, 1988. Judge Francis Young ruled, after two years of hearings, that "Marijuana, in its natural form, is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man.... One must conclude that there is accepted safety for the use of medical marijuana under medical supervision.... In strict medical terms, marijuana is far safer than many foods we commonly consume.... It would be unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious for the DEA to continue to stand between those sufferers and the benefits of this substance in light of the evidence in this record".

Judge Young's massive effort was summarily overruled by an appointed federal bureaucrat, John Lawn, who mumbled the mantra about "sending the wrong message to children". Since this 1988 ruling, the federal agents who jail sick people and terrorize their helpers have been the true outlaws.

In 1996 the voters of California and Arizona demanded access to medical cannabis through the ballot box. Drug Czar General Barry McCaffrey then commissioned a major literature search of all research on medical marijuana. (This way he could avoid generating new data – which always seemed to show more good uses for "medpot").

The prestigious Institute of Medicine conducted McCaffrey's study. They were highly prejudiced against the idea of smoking a medicine – but found that cannabis was indeed an effective medicine, not highly addictive, not a 'gateway' drug, and safe for human use. The IOM found cannabis to be most effective in the treatment of pain, nausea, and appetite loss. They made it clear that for people who are simultaneously hit with this deadly triple whammy (as in AIDS or cancer chemotherapy) "cannabinoid drugs might offer broad spectrum relief not found in any other single medication" (Joy, Watson, and Benson 1999, p.29) When the "Drug Czar's" own conservative study of medical marijuana was finally released it was ignored, like all the others. Federal attacks on state licensed cannabis dispensaries did not end following the IOM report; they increased.

Cannabis is powerfully and naturally analgesic (pain fighting), antibiotic, and anti-tumor. A sincere effort at research and development might make cannabis once again our most common medicine, "the aspirin of the 21st century".

Instead, the most promising research is hidden and not funded.

It has been known for nearly 50 years that THC can shrink or eliminate tumors. Research in 1977 showed that tumors in mice can be reduced up to 82% (White et. al.1977). Cannabis is selective in its action, inhibiting only cancer cells. It not only does not harm healthy cells nearby but "might even protect them from cell death" (Guzman in "Nature", Oct 2003). When Guzman showed in 2000 that THC could destroy otherwise incurable brain cancer in rats no funds were available to further explore this effect. Other studies showed that cannabinoids produce "programmed cell death" in human leukemia and lymphoma cell lines, leaving nearby cells unharmed. The progression of breast cancer, leukemia, and lung cancer were slowed in rats in studies at the University of Virginia Medical College (1975). No follow-up was undertaken.

In 1994 the US Department of Health and Human Services funded research to show that massive doses of THC could cause cancer in rats. The two million dollar experiment "backfired" so completely that findings were suppressed and never published. Results were "leaked" in 1997. The THC was found to have a positive effect. Large amounts of THC produced mice with much less cancer and longer lives. Other studies show the extent to which THC protects brain cells during stroke, head trauma, and even nerve gas exposure.

The prohibition of cannabis has never had anything to do with science, reason, or public health. Banning cannabis is part of an illegitimate "cultural war" with one side using the police/prison power of the state to harm other Americans who feel that their consciousness is wholly their own business. It is a needless, authoritarian, falsely moral crusade, cruelly forcing needless suffering onto countless Americans. Professional "drug warriors" now feel their legitimacy eroding and will say or do anything to preserve their jobs. The Drug Enforcement Administration is fully aware that pot is nearly harmless, however, with marijuana legal there would be few "illegal drug users" in the USA and little need for a DEA. To preserve and expand itself, the DEA now wants to control all supplements and pain medications. Feel safer?

A look at international policy shows that the US federal government uses drug war to control *people*; while allowing or assisting real drugs to flow freely. In "The Politics of Heroin" Professor Alfred McCoy exhaustively demonstrates how the US government has facilitated the flow of hard drugs around the globe for four decades. The CIA constantly steps in to prevent the DEA from busting its drug dealing CIA "assets". Few still doubt that the Reagan administration (remember "Iran-contra"?) was bringing cocaine into America's black communities in order to fund his anti-democratic army in Nicaragua. In Afghanistan the "Taliban" government had nearly ended poppy growing. Now that the USA has controlled Afghanistan for two years, the Afgans supply *three quarters* of the world's raw opium for heroin production.

People will do strange things when their jobs are on the line. Few thought the federal government could ever again match the level of "reefer madness" rhetoric which enabled them to outlaw "marijuana" in the first place. To make cannabis illegal Harry Anslinger of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics would say things like "If the hideous monster Frankenstein came face to face with the monster Marihuana he would drop dead of fright". Pot crazed assassins would supposedly kill their best friends "for the sheer sake of murder itself". Pot was "the worst evil of all" and insanity was the inevitable fate of users. He told of murder, insanity, lust, and death. He completely reversed his story during and after WWII, testifying in Congress that pot make its victims so *passive* that they would be easy marks for communist propaganda. Then as now, truth is absolutely irrelevant, the grip on *authority* and funding is what counts!

Most Americans work hard for the money they pay in taxes and would enjoy seeing their money used on something that helps people. Budgets are tight. In 2004 we are faced with lavishly funded "drug czar" John Walters, spouting ever more ludicrous marijuana sensationalism in the "reefer madness" tradition. Walters is authorized to travel to your state or community (or Canada) to throw his lies, money, and threats around.

Walters has evidently made it his mission to equal Harry Anslinger. He told Canadian reporters that a slight liberalization in Canadian marijuana policy was "a kind of chemical warfare" against the US, and threatened to interfere with traffic at border

crossings. He claims that pot is “by far the largest single factor in illegal drug addiction in the country”. He must know that pot always comes in last in any ranking of drugs on a continuum of addictiveness, and that most people in drug treatment for cannabis are put there by the court. Pot is actually not physically addictive.

Walters claims “Nationwide, no drug matches the threat posed by marijuana” as he exhorts local officials to “aggressively prosecute” offenders. Tobacco kills over 400,000, obesity over 300,000 and alcohol about 150,000 annually. What about heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, or oxycontin. Prescription drugs kill tens of thousands annually

Compare this devastation to cannabis; which usually makes people smile, treat each other kindly, and get the munchies and short term memory loss.

A 2002 review of research on driving by Prof. Mitch Earlywine reveals that “Cannabis may not impair driving”, since pot influenced drivers slow down significantly and leave more space between vehicles.

Medicine is truly what Cannabis *is*; for physical, psychological, spiritual and existential needs. If you don't like it don't use it. California med-pot leader Dennis Peron got in trouble for saying “All marijuana use is medical” – which may be inaccurate. However, if there was ever a plant that was put on earth by a creator for the use; comfort and peace of humans – this is it.

What about danger? There must be some downside to using marijuana, mustn't there?

Every careful analysis of marijuana includes mention of risks. I have read that cannabis may cause lung or respiratory damage, impaired psychomotor performance, heart attack (MI), anxiety or paranoia, trigger the onset of schizophrenia, and stunt growth in children under 17 (as well as concerns about addiction and driving).

Many of these results are unpublished (heart attack) or never replicated (stunted growth). It is possible that cannabis could help to precipitate a heart attack since, like exercise, it temporarily raises the heart rate.

It would seem logical that smoking marijuana should cause lung problems. Pot smoke contains many of the same tars and chemicals that are in tobacco, and smoking too much of anything can cause bronchial irritation. However, “not a single case of lung cancer, emphysema, or other significant pulmonary pathology attributable to cannabis has been reported in this country”(Grinspoon and Bakalar, 1993).

Possibly medical cannabis should come with a warning label about not driving or using heavy machinery – as is done with other medications. Anxiety and paranoia can occur rarely; simply provide reassurance and it will go away (a doctor could provide a valium tablet). Schizophrenia is not a disorder that cannabis claims to help, although much self medication occurs. It may be possible that cannabis has catalyzed the expression of schizophrenia in sensitive individuals. The biggest danger of marijuana, of course, is getting arrested, which happens to around 700,000 Americans each year!

Millions have been spent to find something wrong with marijuana, and still its greatest danger may be “if a bale of it falls on you” (Friedman, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1990). When marijuana came near to legalization in the mid 70's we soon heard scares about brain atrophy, chromosome damage, compromised immune systems and men growing breasts.

Anyone concerned about dangers from medical marijuana may find comfort in three facts. First, it is safer than nearly any other drug; safer than common foods. Second, very sick people may not care much about a tiny possibility of future harm when they find something that makes their life tolerable. Third, we have over a century of large scale government sponsored commissions and longitudinal studies which all have failed to observe "any deleterious effects from its continued use." (New York Mayor's Committee Report, 1944). The "LaGuardia" report continued "Quite the contrary, marihuana and its derivatives and allied synthetics have potentially valuable therapeutic applications which merit further evaluation".

Some readers know how difficult it is to get a serious scientist to make an unqualified statement. Nonetheless, the editors of *Lancet*, a prestigious peer reviewed British medical journal, after a review of 30 years of research, stated that "The smoking of cannabis, even long term, is not harmful to health".

A lethal dosage of cannabis is not possible. It has been estimated that death could possibly be reached at a level of cannabis ingestion that is 40,000 times what it takes to feel the effect. There is no way to accomplish that feat.

Not having cannabis *does* kill people. Such deaths are usually unnoticed. A rare exception was the very public governmental murder of Peter McWilliams. Mr. McWilliams was a successful writer; his books were on the New York Times best seller list for months. Suffering from both cancer and AIDS, he had to have marijuana to keep food down. After California voters passed Prop. 215, legalizing medical marijuana, McWilliams began to grow it. He was jailed and released from prison on condition that he not use the medicine that everyone knew he could not live without. Many appeals requested compassion from the government, carefully explaining his medical condition. Vomiting hit McWilliams while he was in the bathtub, where he choked and died. He was murdered by the "moralists".

Other fine and loving Americans have lost hope when their medicine was stolen - and have felt forced into suicide. Byron Stamate was a 70 year old retired government worker who grew a few plants to help his longtime partner, Shirley Dorsey, with crippling back pain. The government took all of Stamate's land and savings, and Shirley's medicine. Rather than testify against Mr. Stamate, Ms. Dorsey chose death. Her suicide note said "They want to take our property, security, and herbal medicine away from us, even though we have not caused harm to anyone....I am old, tired, and ill, and I see no end to the harassment and pressures until they destroy us".

The four children of Dennis and Denise Schilling wore t-shirts to their parent's funeral which contained messages such as "DARE to know the TRUTH about Marijuana". The Shillings parents desperately needed medical marijuana and grew a few plants. A "snitch" reported them and US Federal Marshals soon delivered a forfeiture notice for their small home. Refusing to be separated, destroyed, and live in pain, the parents of this American family said goodbye and hung themselves in a Madison Wisconsin motel room.

Mrs. Shilling explained her long struggle with illness in her death note: "I had tried every politically correct route, from religion to psychotropic drugs, and none of them helped me in any way. Perhaps someday people like me will not be persecuted".

Ann Arbor voters can help bring that day near.

Something has gone desperately wrong in "the land of the free and the home of the brave". How did a limited federal government with specifically enumerated powers, fully encumbered by a detailed bill of rights, get to the point of taking homes and children away from citizens who grow a natural herb? Growing a plant in your closet and consuming it in your living room is simply not "interstate commerce". Our Constitution is being destroyed to stop a plant.

The Nuremberg Trials firmly established the principle that "just following orders" is not a defense. Public officials who keep medicine from the desperately sick had better hope there is no "judgment day".

Our duty is to restore the principles that give greatness to our nation.

We can restore simple compassion for injured and sick people, with medical marijuana and adequate pain treatment.

We can restore the principle of Federalism, allowing our separate states to come up with divergent and innovative methods for dealing with social and medical problems.

We can restore our basic division of power within government, our "checks and balances", by ending "mandatory minimums" and restoring discretionary power to judges.

We can restore our precious right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. Some Americans still don't understand that their home, all finances, and children can be taken from them before they are even *charged* with a crime. The government may not leave you a penny to hire a lawyer, or a lawyer might refuse to help you anyway, since (s)he knows the government may steal her fee.

We must restore meaning to the clearly written words of our Bill of Rights.

We must allow free speech about the folly of drug war. These days such speech may end your career. We now have a law in the USA that *prohibits criticism* of the drug war in advertising on all public transportation systems that accept federal funds. Drug Czar Walters thinks marijuana legalization is not "an area for legitimate debate". The United Nations recommends that criticism of the Drug War be made illegal.

We must restore the demolished Fourth Amendment. Our government is supposed to have "probable cause" to believe that you have broken a law before they enter your home to search and seize. Agents can now legally enter your home without probable cause, examine and photograph everything, take what they want, download your computer, and leave without telling you.

The "drug war exception" to the Bill of Rights has also eliminated the Fifth Amendment. Employers can legally demand your bodily fluids to force you to incriminate yourself. You may now be jailed twice for the same crime (State and Federal) and all your property can be taken immediately with no compensation whatsoever.

Amendment Six is defunct since you can now be convicted on the basis of testimony from paid anonymous informants and the money you need to pay your lawyer may be taken from you. The government is now doing everything possible to limit the power of juries (Amendment Seven). We actually have the power of "jury nullification" - a jury can judge the validity of a law as it applies to a case before them. Amendment Eight bans "cruel and unusual punishment". This is a very unfunny sick joke to herbal "offenders".

Amendments Nine and Ten make it crystal clear that most rights are left to the states or to the people, and that there is no conceivable way the national government could constitutionally use police power to regulate natural plants.

We can begin to restore the status of our “learned professions” which should function as an informal system of checks and balances in our democracy. It is socially dangerous to strip independence and self regulation from the professions. The medical judgment of doctors, the discretion of judges, the decisions of courts and Commissions (Judge Young), the ability of defense lawyers to function and now even the independence of scientific inquiry have all fallen under the thumb of rigidly ideological federal bureaucrats.

Marijuana has become the crumbling cornerstone of the prohibitionist culture warrior’s teetering house of cards. Like witch hunting or the persecution of Jews, drug war has three ancient and basic social functions that ideological ruling groups value highly and hate to relinquish.

- It allows the police and prison system to grow and dominate society, assuring the ruling group that common folks are tightly under control.
- Selective enforcement of drug laws enables dominant groups to attack and neutralize particular groups they detest, like racial, ethnic and “countercultural” minorities. (Drug war is our modern technique of Racism. Figures from the American Civil Liberties Union show that African Americans are about 13% of the population and constitute about 13 % of monthly drug users. However 35% of those arrested for drugs are African – American, 55% of those convicted for drug possession are Black, as are 74% of those actually imprisoned. Their right to vote may be denied them for life. Hispanics and Blacks make up over 90% of drug prisoners in many states.) Children of congressmen and prosecutors who deal drugs are given token punishments, if any.
- “Drugs” and “druggies” provide a “scapegoat” for the government, an excuse for why we don’t provide our citizens the basic human services that are the birthright of citizens in all other industrial democracies. Citizens will demand little else from government if that government can create the illusion of a “major threat” and convince citizens they are being protected.

The “baby boomers”, at the leading edge of the 1960’s “counter culture”, are now approaching sixty. As this huge generation ages the drumbeat of support for “medical marijuana” will become irresistible. Advancing age brings aches and pains which cannabis takes away; and replaces with feelings of satisfaction and a positive outlook. Much of the demand for the recent re-scheduling of marijuana in England came from their “pensioners”, who use it mostly for arthritis. It has been said that the greatest benefits of cannabis are wasted on the young. When you can join cannabis with aging you have evidence that there is a creator who cares.

Pure THC is prescribed in the US as “Marinol”, so it is clear that cannabis can be medicine if somebody is making enough money from it. Marinol, however, is usually inferior to mother nature’s blend of cannabinoids, often not working at all or getting the patient too high to function.

If cannabis is not medicine why does the federal government still send out monthly boxes of low quality, throat burning, machine rolled joints to eight citizens; the survivors of an earlier compassionate program?

Canada has announced that it will soon start dispensing medical marijuana from pharmacies.

GW Pharmaceuticals in England will soon begin marketing standardized whole cannabis extracts in non smoked forms.

In its natural form, or baked into cookies or brownies, cannabis medications can be cheap or homemade – lowering our soaring drug costs. Marijuana can be used in a “vaporizer”, which is smokeless. The active ingredients are released by bringing the pot to just below the point of combustion.

Doctors and patients must be able to tailor medications to fit individual situations. Ann Arbor can provide leadership.

Is it really immoral if a desperately sick person feels a bit of euphoria using medical marijuana? When a patient feels better and has their outlook brightened, it is wholly to the good. The use of synthetic antidepressants is skyrocketing; must we ban the natural one which has a 5000 year history of safe and effective use? A sick person's attitude or outlook on life can play a major role in their outcome.

It is the federal government of the USA that stands implacably against the compassion and justice that medical marijuana represents. Each callous act is justified with the mantra about “sending the wrong message to children”. Nurse Mary Lynn Mathre, addictions consultation nurse at the University of Virginia Health System, says “Lying to children and teenagers about a drug's value sends a more troubling message”. Do teenagers gain respect for a government that is prepared to let innocent sick people live and die in pain. Would we prefer to have young people drink and drive; or smoke tobacco? No reputable doctor would claim that alcohol or tobacco is safer than cannabis.

Thirty-five states approved medical marijuana between 1978 and 1992. Programs went unimplemented in the face of federal intransigence. Many major medical, nursing and public health organizations support cannabis as medicine. Voters in eight states and the District of Columbia have adopted medical marijuana through citizen sponsored initiatives since 1996 – California, Arizona, Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Maine, and Nevada. Each one of these approvals was preceded by days or weeks of testimony about terrible illness and how cannabis helped, when nothing else would work.

Take Keith Vines for instance. As a county prosecutor he had put many “druggies” behind bars before he got sick. He tried every drug, including Marinol, as he continued to vomit and lose weight. He knew he had little chance to live. Then he found cannabis, gained 45 pounds, and lived. He knows that “without marijuana I would be dead”. I wonder if he still jails potheads?

Burlington, Vermont recently passed their Medical Marijuana initiative with an 82% majority. Can we do better in Ann Arbor?

The citizens of Ann Arbor are independent, ethical, and well informed. We respond to facts, and long ago decided (and reaffirmed) that we don't think pot is a major threat to health or to civilization. Through a city charter amendment to protect authorized medical marijuana users in our city we can again take a leadership role on the side of

compassion and American values. We can be proud of our local effort to stand up for health, reason, and liberty.