

# MARAJUNIA Anti-Prohibition Project

An Inland Empire Medical Patient Support Group  
& Law Reform Organization

COMPASSION & COMMON SENSE



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September 2010

## Affordable Access



As a nurse working at the THCF Medical Clinic, I conduct physical exams on patients coming to see the doctor to obtain a medical marijuana recommendation. When they come in for their annual renewal, I always ask them how cannabis helped. I get all kinds of responses from “it relieves my pain” to “I don’t take as many anti-depressants” to “I can finally get a good night’s sleep.”

Recently a 75-year-old lady who has degenerative disc disease and advanced arthritis—that little old-lady pain that never goes away—came for her renewal. When I asked her how cannabis had helped her last year, she responded by telling me “Before I started using marijuana, I was taking 6 to 8 Vicodin every day. Now I take only one or two and sometimes I don’t have to take any. It has changed my life.” As usual I was very moved by what she said, but the amazing thing about cannabis is that I hear similar stories all the time.

It was what she said next that was so disheartening. “But you know,” she said very quietly, almost like she was embarrassed to admit “sometimes I have to take the Vicodin because I can’t afford the marijuana.”

I am well aware that most patients cannot afford to obtain all the marijuana they need for therapeutic relief, but hearing it from her hit me a like a ton of bricks. I never ever want to hear again a 75-year-old lady in chronic little old-lady pain tell me that she has to take “Vicodin because I can’t afford the marijuana.”

The exorbitant cost of marijuana is beyond belief. You can go to any grocery store and for \$10 purchase a pound of good quality coffee. Coffee, however, can only be grown in certain regions of the world, is very labor intensive, has to be shipped to this country, processed and then delivered to stores. In contrast, cannabis sells for half the price of gold, even though cannabis can be grown more like alfalfa, which currently sells for 10 cents a pound.

If we grew corn like we grow marijuana, you would be paying \$25 an ear. Everyone should be able to afford marijuana, but because of the byzantine laws that govern how most medical marijuana patients can get their medicine, little old ladies in pain will never be able to afford all the marijuana they need and neither will the vast majority of medical marijuana patients.

There is absolutely nothing on the horizon that will lower the price—nothing, that is, except for Proposition 19. The think-tank known as the Rand Corporation, no friend of marijuana—medical or otherwise—released a report stating that if Prop. 19 passes, marijuana prices will drop to \$40 an ounce as Prop. 19 will make large-scale outdoor commercial cannabis cultivation legal.

Prop. 19 allows municipalities to enact an excise tax on marijuana, but at \$40 an ounce, marijuana will be far cheaper even with an excise tax of \$100 an ounce. Through their collectives, medical marijuana patients are exempt from the requirements of Prop. 19, so our 75-year-old lady will be able to get her medicine excise tax-free at a regulated and licensed collective. She will be able to get an ounce for \$40 which even little old ladies on Social Security could afford.

One common thread found amongst almost all medical marijuana patients who oppose Prop. 19 is that they have access to all the marijuana they want—usually because they are in a position to grow it themselves. Since they get all they need then to hell with everyone else—after all, it’s all about their needs.

Very few of those opposing Prop. 19 have done anything that will realistically lower the price to the point where most people can afford to purchase sufficient quantities. Collectives masquerading as not-for-profit entities especially do not want to see the price substantially reduced. If Prop. 19 fails, I challenge all these patients and collective operators opposed to Prop. 19 to roll up their sleeves and actually do something to get the price down—if not to \$40 an ounce—at least to \$100 an ounce.

Don’t hold your breath waiting for that to happen though. Lowering the price is not about them—it’s about you. On Election Day, get yourself to the polls and vote Yes on 19.

Lanny Swerdlow, R.N. invites readers to subscribe to his free marijuana email newsletter by sending an email to [lanny@marijuananeews.org](mailto:lanny@marijuananeews.org) or by calling