



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 30, 2011

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Medical marijuana bill reintroduction gives patients hope

Madison – Representative Mark Pocan and Senator Jon Erpenbach reintroduced the Jacki Rickert Medical Marijuana Act to allow seriously ill Wisconsin residents access to a medicine to ease their pain.

The two legislators today circulated the Jacki Rickert Medical Marijuana Act for co-sponsors amongst their colleagues. The measure would allow access to medical marijuana for patients with a number of debilitating diseases and conditions who receive a prescription for marijuana from their doctors. In addition, the bill sets up a registry for these patients with the Department of Health Services.

“This is an issue where people are clearly way ahead of the policy makers,” Pocan said. “The Wisconsin Legislature needs to catch up with the public and pass this bill because making medical marijuana legal is the right and compassionate thing to do for patients in pain.”

This bill gives patients and their doctors the option to consider marijuana without fear of prosecution. The act is similar to a 2008 Michigan referendum that passed in all counties, with a 63 percent majority statewide. A November 18, 2011 CBS News poll confirmed national support for medical cannabis remains strong, with 77 percent of Americans supporting medical marijuana.

“Patients with a debilitating medical condition should not live in fear of being prosecuted for using marijuana to ease their pain or aid their healing,” said Erpenbach. “People deserve compassionate legal treatment prescribed by their doctor.”

The bill provides a medical necessity defense for marijuana-related prosecutions and property seizure if the patient has valid prescription from a physician and an ID card from Department of Health Services.

“The medical profession teaches us compassion. There is good evidence that medical marijuana can help relieve pain and suffering for patients,” said Dr. Angela Janis. “Physicians and patients should have the opportunity to utilize all available resources, especially when conventional treatments have failed.”

Conditions covered could include cancer, glaucoma, AIDS and HIV and other diseases as could be determined by administrative rule. The bill also creates a maximum amount of marijuana a patient may have, establishing clear limits for both the patient and law enforcement. Finally, the bill gives the Department of Health the ability to create rules for a registry of people allowed to use medical marijuana and for the licensing and regulation of a non-profit corporation to distribute marijuana.

Currently 16 states as well as Washington, DC have legalized medical marijuana.

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