

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE
State Representative Ruth Fahrbach



**Governor's veto of medical
marijuana bill warranted**

Last week, Governor M. Jodi Rell vetoed H.B. 6715 *An Act Concerning the Palliative Use of Marijuana*. After an impassioned debate during the regular legislative session, the bill passed the state House of Representatives by an 89-58 vote, and the state Senate by a 23-13 margin. For the record, I voted against the bill.

The intent of the bill was to allow those suffering with chronic pain to use marijuana, as prescribed by a doctor, to alleviate pain and suffering. While helping those suffering with chronic pain is a goal shared by everyone involved in the process, the bill had a number of problems, including allowing people to grow their own marijuana plants in their homes to use after getting a prescription from a doctor. Enforcing the law with regards to who can or can't grow marijuana on their property would have been quite difficult for our law enforcement officers.

Another problem, which was cited by the governor when she vetoed the bill, is that few, if any, doctors would be willing to prescribe marijuana, given that they would still be in violation of federal law, even though prescribing marijuana in Connecticut has been legal since 1981. Enforcing the law would have most assuredly been difficult as well. It should be noted that the 1981 law was passed (with my support) to allow doctors to prescribe when and if permitted under federal law.

In addition to the legal issues associated with the medical use of marijuana, there are a number of medical groups that reject the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes. That list of organizations includes: The American Medical Association, the National Multiple Sclerosis

Society, the American Cancer Society, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatricians, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Glaucoma Society. One major concern is that marijuana use can mask symptoms of a disease which could delay or prevent individuals from seeking necessary medical help.

The governor pointed out, and I also believe, that the bill would have sent the wrong message to our children. We need to teach our children about being compassionate, but we can't on one hand tell our children that illegal, non-medicinal drugs are harmful to them, and then allow a gateway drug like marijuana to be used by qualifying patients in their homes, without any tangible supervision or regulation.

There are a number of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved drugs available for patients suffering from chronic pain. The pharmaceutical companies are still working on developing more drugs to help patients deal with pain. This isn't about profits for drug companies, as some who argued in favor of the bill have implied. Research and studies have shown that smoked marijuana causes damage to the brain, heart, immune system and lungs as well as impairing hearing and memory. One marijuana cigarette is four times as potent as one tobacco cigarette producing tumors and respiratory and heart ailments. According a June 2007 NY Times Op-Ed by Henry I. Miller, a doctor and head of the FDA Office of Biotechnology from 1989 to 1993: “. . . marijuana is not a uniform, well-defined material. Different plant strains vary radically in the cannabinoid composition and in the contaminants—fungi, bacteria, pesticides, heavy metals and other substances—they contain. Products made without any proof of quality control may be ineffective or harmful. If marijuana has therapeutic potential, it should be required to pass muster with the F.D.A. like any other medicine.”

If you have any questions or comments regarding the use of marijuana for medical purposes, please contact my office at 240-8700.

Rep. Ruth Fahrback represents the 61st District, including Suffield, and parts of Windsor and East Granby, in the General Assembly.