

## Amendment 2 Would Legalize Medical Marijuana in Florida

NOPE Task Force interviews two experts on Amendment 2 to determine its impact on teenagers and the wider community, if Florida voters approve it on November 4.

On November 4, Florida voters will decide whether to legalize medical marijuana in the Sunshine State. The Florida Right to Medical Marijuana Initiative, known as Amendment 2, is an initiated constitutional amendment.

More than 410,000 people would be expected to seek the drug in the first year for these conditions, as defined by the ballot question: “cancer, glaucoma, positive status for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), hepatitis C, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Crohn’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis or other conditions for which a physician believes that the medical use of marijuana would likely outweigh the potential health risks for a patient.”

If approved by 60 percent of voters, the measure would expand the use of medical marijuana already approved in June through the Compassionate Medical Cannabis Act of 2014 -- nicknamed the Charlotte’s Web bill -- that allows for the use of a low-THC medical marijuana to treat conditions including epilepsy and Lou Gehrig’s disease.

NOPE Task Force asked two experts to offer their insights on Amendment 2.

One is Sheriff Donald Eslinger of Seminole County and member of the Don’t Let Florida Go to Pot, a coalition of people and organizations that are educating Floridians on the dangers of marijuana. The second is Jeff Kadel, executive director of Palm Beach County Substance Awareness Coalition, which coordinates activities, provides information, and organizes public awareness campaigns to steer youths and adults away from harmful substances.

### **1) What is your position on legalizing medical marijuana in Florida?**

**Donald Eslinger (DE):** This initiative does not belong in the Florida Constitution. It is too broad and will create an environment ripe for abuse which is contrary to the interests of public health, safety and welfare; therefore diminishing quality of life in Florida.

**Jeff Kadel (JK):** There is overwhelmingly opposition to Amendment 2 by Florida’s medical and law enforcement community, as well as many business, civic and elected leaders, including former Florida Supreme Court justices. This amendment has so many loopholes and so much vagueness that it would lead our state to many unintended and undesirable consequences. It’s not a compassionate effort to

legalize marijuana for medical purposes, as the amendment supporters are promoting.

If this amendment passes, the sale and use of marijuana will be advertised, promoted, and have very little administrative oversight. Plus, growers, transporters, sellers, doctors, patients and caregivers involved in the transfer and administration of potent marijuana products will be given complete civil and immunity under the amendment.

Is this the kind of environment we want to create in our community for our children?

## **2) If passed, how would Florida's law be different from other states? Will it be more lenient?**

**(DE):** First and foremost, it will not be a state law; it will be in our State Constitution. By adding this into our State Constitution it will make it almost impossible to put the type of safety restrictions on it that proponents claim can be done by rule or the legislature. Of the states, including the District of Columbia, that have legalized medical marijuana, only California and Massachusetts have requirements similar to Florida's proposal that allow for physician discretion when it comes to qualifying conditions. This means conceivably that marijuana can be given for any condition where the benefit of the marijuana would outweigh its risks. In addition, other states have tighter requirements when it comes to recommending marijuana to minors, such as requiring the physician to explain the risks and harms associated with marijuana use and/or multiple physician assessments; and age restrictions on the purchase of marijuana without parental consent. No criminal or civil liability to anyone in the industry.

**(JK)** Again, because this poorly written amendment is so vague, my fear is that it will open the door to the general use of marijuana. Physicians, including dentist, will be able to 'recommend' the use of marijuana for 'other conditions' to include such things as pain, insomnia, or just about anything you can imagine.

In Florida alone, the Department of Health estimates that, if this amendment passes, there will be 1,789 pot shops, 417,252 patients using marijuana, and another 250,351 caregivers, who would have the authority to provide marijuana to multiple individuals.

## **3) What kind of impact will legalization of medical marijuana have on teenagers?**

**(DE):** We have seen increased usage of marijuana in teenagers in states with medical marijuana laws. Colorado's youth usage of marijuana is 39% higher than the

national average. Studies have shown that frequent marijuana use by teenagers leads to a decrease in brain function over time. Additionally, other states that have legalized marijuana for recreational or medicinal purposes have seen vast increases in accidental exposures and hospitalizations, especially in children, and directly as a result of the increasing availability of edible marijuana such as “Pot-Tarts,” “KronDike Bars,” “Nugtella,” and “Stoney Ranchers.”

**(JK)** For many of us, our main concern is that this amendment will make marijuana more accessible for youth, and, even worse, normalize it to them. Teens and young adults will see that marijuana is legal and supposedly being used as medicine, so they will think it is no big deal to use it themselves.

There’s been lots of research showing that marijuana affects the human body. The long-term effects of marijuana use can include altered brain development and poor educational outcome with increased likelihood of dropping out of school, cognitive impairment, and low IQ scores. In high doses, marijuana can exacerbate paranoia and psychosis, especially for those with a pre-existing genetic vulnerability to diseases like schizophrenia.

#### **4) And how would the amendment affect our community as a whole?**

**(DE):** The passage of Amendment 2 will adversely impact our quality of life in Florida. It will lead to serious health and public safety consequences for our communities, children and families. Marijuana legislation will increase public costs. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, for every dollar in alcohol and tobacco tax revenue, society loses ten dollars in social costs from accidents to health damage. According to the Florida Estimating Conference, if the amendment passes there will be over 1700 treatment centers statewide. Based on population, there would be more “treatment centers” than McDonalds, Starbucks, and Chick-Fil-A Restaurants in Seminole County.

**(JK)** I agree with many business leaders: the passage of this amendment will create a climate that will decrease productivity and increase risk for businesses. There’s a recent report out that nearly 1 in 10 Americans are showing up to work high on marijuana. I’m worried this will only get worse with the passage of Amendment 2.

To learn more, visit Don't Let Florida Go To Pot. ([www.dontletfloridagotopot.com](http://www.dontletfloridagotopot.com))

To get specific information about the ballot, click here:

<http://election.dos.state.fl.us/initiatives/initdetail.asp?account=50438&seqnum=2>