

Legalized recreational marijuana use may be just around the corner

By
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Oregon’s voters will decide whether or not to legalize recreational marijuana in a few weeks for adults 21 and over. Measure 91 would allow adults to possess up to eight ounces of “dried” marijuana and grow up to four plants.

“We want to bring marijuana out of the criminal element and into the regulated market,” said Anthony Johnson, the Chief Petitioner for the Yes on the Measure 91 campaign.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission would be tasked with regulating marijuana sales.

Measure supporters say legalizing recreational marijuana will free up the police to spend more time on serious crimes and regulation and taxation, if handled fairly, could bring a host of economic benefits to both the state and smaller municipalities.

“Maybe the time has come,” said Cave Junction City Councilman John Gardiner. “Here in Josephine

County, we’ve got a 1,000 pound gorilla in our living room. The cannabis crop is probably worth more money than all our other industries put together. If we really want to improve our economic situation and feel safer in our communities, we should regulate and tax marijuana. This won’t go away. Nationwide, legalization is inevitable, so why should we wait to reap some benefit when we’re so much in need now?”

More than 20 cities in Oregon have already passed ordinances that provide for the taxation of marijuana grown in their towns, and if Measure 91 passes, those city officials hope their ordinances will be grandfathered in.

“These city leaders wrote their own ordinances because Measure 91 doesn’t allow local governments to tax their own crops, so the money would only go to the state,” Gardiner said. “I think we should follow the lead of the city manager of Ashland, who got this idea started. Why shouldn’t Cave Junction benefit as well? We have many needs, ranging from increased

public safety to building a second little league ball field, installing bike racks in town and doing something with the swimming pool. These revenues could really help.”

Additionally, Gardiner says if cannabis crops grown throughout the county were taxed, those revenues could help fund county public safety services.

“We once used timber receipts from logging our forests to pay for law enforcement, so why shouldn’t we tax cannabis crops for the same reason?” he said.

Washington and Colorado already legalized recreational marijuana and Measure 91 is partly modeled after these states’ laws, though there are key differences. While Colorado allows 12 plants to be grown in each household; Measure 91 only allows four plants to be grown per home.

Another difference in the marijuana laws from state-to-state relate to driving under the influence. Where Washington has a specific THC limit (THC is the chemical responsible for getting people “high”), Measure 91

has no such limit.

“A THC limit is an arbitrary number and the real issue is impairment,” Johnson said. “Driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal today and it will still be illegal if Measure 91 passes.”

“Some of my biggest concerns have to do with public safety,” said Josephine County Sheriff Gil Gilbertson. “If the measure passes, we’ll see more people using marijuana and that means more people driving under the influence.”

While measure opponents say there is no reliable test for marijuana intoxication, Gilbertson says police officers are trained to recognize all kinds of impairment and anyone observed creating traffic hazards for any reason are pulled over.

Opponents are also worried that retail sales of recreational marijuana, along with the measure’s provision allowing Oregonians to grow their own, will inevitably make it easier for kids to get their hands on the stuff.

Measure supporters respond that legalization just adds another

product to an “adults-only” category that already includes tobacco and alcohol, and since there’s no movement to ban these substances to keep them away from kids, there is no justification to prevent the legalization of marijuana.

Supporters also say the measure’s wording is flexible enough to allow the legislature to pass additional new laws to best govern the situation as needed.

“Here’s the thing,” said Cave Junction resident Janie Williams. “Right now just about anyone can claim they have a medical condition and get a medical marijuana card. The current system is a sham. Measure 91 makes the situation honest and raises a whole lot of money to help pay for public services.”

Regarding profits from marijuana sales, Measure 91 directs 40 percent of the tax money to the schools, 35 percent to state and local police and 25 percent to drug prevention and treatment programs. It’s estimated the measure could generate up to \$40 million dollars in its first year.

Local aviators chase their dreams

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Dreams can be infectious. Just ask Wolf Emonds, proprietor of “Captain Drake’s Family Aerial Adventures,” a small aircraft flying school in O’Brien.

“Every once in a while we are blessed to meet truly remarkable people,” Emonds said. “Because of Bill and Louise Gettle, today I have a growing business.”

Emonds’ father was a smokejumper, so he grew up at the Illinois Valley Airport, looking upward, envisioning a future in aviation. Then, over the past decade, the Gettles, owners of “The Flying Machine Aircraft Repairs & Restorations,” watched Emonds work to acquire enough flight hours and experience to complete the exams and certificates required to become a flight instructor.

“Finally the day came to purchase an airplane for my business,” Emonds said.

But most big dreams don’t materialize without setbacks along the way. After getting

the single-engine Ercoupe back to the IV Airport, it turned out to be in far worse mechanical shape than initially thought. Without skipping a beat, the Gettles rolled Emonds’ plane into their hanger.

“For whatever reason, Bill and Lou decided to rescue my dream of building this unique flight school,” Emonds said. “They disassembled that airplane down to its last component. They removed the paint and cleaned that aluminum till it looked factory new. Lovingly, painfully, piece-by-piece they inspected, repaired and replaced everything. They turned my plane into a work of art, and now, I can’t fly her into any airport without being noticed and complimented.”

While Emonds tried to pay as much as he could, he lacked the funds to make even a dent in the cost of the renovation. He asked the Gettles why they took the task on.

“All they’ll tell me is that they love my dream too and want me to share my passion for aviation with all those who will come,” Emonds said. “I’ve no idea how much money I owe them. They refuse to even give me an

invoice. They simply say, ‘Wolf, you’ll eventually pay us when you can.’”

“We took a liking to Wolf,” Bill Gettle said. “He got a little ahead of himself and bought this plane that needed a lot of work. But, he goes out of his way to help others, so we decided that it wouldn’t hurt us to give him a hand. He’s always been good for his word. He does what he says he’s going to do.”

Now, one way Emonds pays it forward is by volunteering to train one Illinois Valley High School student each year for that student’s senior project.

“We need an aviation club at the High School,” Emonds said. “Aviation is a fantastic confidence builder.”

Beyond aviation, it’s clear the trio also share a philosophy about the power of positive thinking and taking charge of their lives, and it tends to rub off on anyone who hangs around them. Perhaps viewing life from a bird’s eye view helps provide perspective and motivation to overcome challenges.

“We do this thing that we call creative visualization and so far it has worked pretty

good,” Gettle said. “And if I ever get a little down in life, my wife has me haul the plane out and go fly for awhile. This does the trick, because there’s no room for other problems in the cockpit, you need to be flying that plane.”

Meeting and marrying later in life, the Gettles both went back to school. While Bill earned his AMP license to repair single and twin engine private airplanes, Louise studied computer science and bookkeeping.

“We were both starving students in our fifties,” she said. “I waited tables to help make ends meet and Bill repaired trucks at night. But, we had a blast in those times.”

They initially set up shop in Lakeport, California, until their business outgrew that airport. Louise previously lived in Rogue River and had an appreciation for the region, so they checked out the IV Airport, liked what they saw, and bought 40 acres nearby to build a home on.

See Dreams on A-9

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