

Measure 17-81 raises eyebrows

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IVN Contributing Writer

The Josephine County Board of Commissioners have placed Measure 17-81 on the May 16 Special Election Ballot to gather public sentiment regarding the prohibition of recreational cannabis production in Rural Residential zones. Currently, recreational cannabis farms are under the supervision of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) whereas medical gardens are under the supervision of the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP). Currently, there are a great deal more OMMP operations than OLCC operations though OLCC farms tend to be much bigger.

The county commissioners have allegedly utilized some 327 cannabis-related complaints, against cannabis production sites, to justify putting measure 17-81 on the ballot. However, according to Julia Schmelzer, community development director, there has not been a single complaint filed against OLCC farms within Josephine County and that all of the complaints filed so far have been against OMMP gardens and illegal

operations. Schmelzer added that, out of the 2,862 currently registered OMMP gardens, there are perhaps only a few hundred operations that are, "ruining it for the good growers."

When asked whether or not the county plans to ban OLCC farms—should the measure pass—Commissioner Simon Hare said, "This has not been predetermined." Commissioner Lilly Morgan added that she is not familiar with Senate Bill 1057 and that the commissioners have discussed the formation of a "marijuana advisory board." Additionally, Hare added, "It's too early to say," as to whether or not current cannabis operations would be grandfathered in if there was a ban.

"Measure 17-81 is a gross misrepresentation to the voters," Chris Hall, chairman of the Cave Junction Farmers' Market said. Hall made it explicit that his statements are made from personal opinion and do not necessarily reflect those of his organization. In addition to misrepresentation, Hall charges the commissioners with, "strategically under representing the facts." Hall continued with, "The

economic development brought on by the cannabis industry in our region will be gutted if this measure passes because the commissioners anticipate that Senate Bill 1057 will pass."

Senate Bill 1057 aims, among other things, to put OMMP gardens under purview of the OLCC. In summary, if the county government places a ban on OLCC farms as a result of Measure 17-81 and, subsequently, if Senate Bill 1057 passes, then OMMP grow sites on rural residential land will fall under OLCC control and will be retroactively banned as well.

"They [the commissioners] would be willing to sacrifice huge numbers of jobs, consumer shopping and economic development because they have a renowned prejudice and bias against cannabis," Hall said. Going further, Hall theorized that banning cannabis production will likely force rural areas in Josephine County to collapse economically.

"Prohibition is over and they just don't care," Hall concluded.

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