

Hot for pot



REUTERS/ANTHONY BOLANTE

If marijuana has a smoking chance of becoming legal in Oregon, Roy Kaufmann is the man to see it through

BY JAKE THOMAS
STAFF WRITER

It's going to happen. Marijuana's legalization is inevitable.

But inevitable does not have a time line, as Oregon voters demonstrated in 2012 when they turned down Measure 80, a ballot initiative that would have legalized weed. In the same election, voters in Colorado and Washington made history by approving measures that ended prohibition on marijuana.

But 2014 will be different. So says Roy Kaufmann. A one-time spokesperson for Portland Mayor Sam Adams, Kaufmann is currently a vice president at Hubbell Communications, an advocacy firm that is working on a legalization campaign in Oregon on behalf of the National Cannabis Coalition.

For Kaufmann, the question of legalization is not a matter of if, but when, and, just as importantly, how. He says that this new campaign won't repeat the mistake of 2012 and will draw on lessons from marijuana-legalization efforts in Colorado and Washington, as well as a small South American country that could soon be ahead of much of the U.S. on the issue.

Although language for the new ballot initiative is being finalized, Kaufmann is bullish on its prospects. He says that the last legislative session in Oregon was a "milestone session for the cannabis advocacy community," with legislation

passing that will add post-traumatic stress disorder to the list of maladies treatable with medicinal pot, provide better regulation of dispensaries and reform sentencing for drug offenses. Even though lawmakers stopped short of full legalization, Kaufmann thinks that voters will get ahead of their elected leaders in the next election.

"What the polls show is that more than 80 percent of Oregonians said they saw marijuana legalization and regulation as inevitable," says Kaufmann. "I think what we're seeing is that there is a smart, rational frame work that is being proposed, and they want to hear the arguments for why it's being proposed."

Jake Thomas: *Seeing the national shift in attitudes and laws on marijuana legalization and what happened in Colorado and Washington, what are the lessons for getting it legalized in Oregon?*

Roy Kaufmann: I think overall that the Washington and Colorado initiatives were successful because they demonstrated that there was both a compelling case for why prohibition needed to end and why it had failed in every possible way. They also made the argument for not only why, they made the argument for how.

And I think that's where the Measure 80 campaign in Oregon didn't benefit from some of the advantages that Colorado and Washington had. At the end of the day, people want to know that

there is going to be a logical regulatory framework that is workable, even as people are very much feeling out what the best approach is. So the substance of the actual ballot initiative is just as important as the overall argument. In Oregon, anecdotally, I spoke to a lot of voters after the election who were clearly on board with legalization but didn't support Measure 80 because they felt that the substance of the initiative wasn't something they could support. So that's what we're going to correct this time around and be successful next year.

J.T.: *What was wrong with Measure 80? Was it bad framework or was it sold badly?*

R.K.: Those two are not mutually exclusive. It's really hard to get public support or financial support whether it's in Oregon or outside if it doesn't have a voice in creating the framework. Measure 80 was drafted with stakeholders in Oregon, but without a lot of input from organizations around the country that have been working on this issue for a long time.

I think the other piece was legitimate criticism of some of the elements of the proposal. For example, unlimited personal possession and cultivation are just a little beyond where the voters are on the issue. The average voter's thinking is

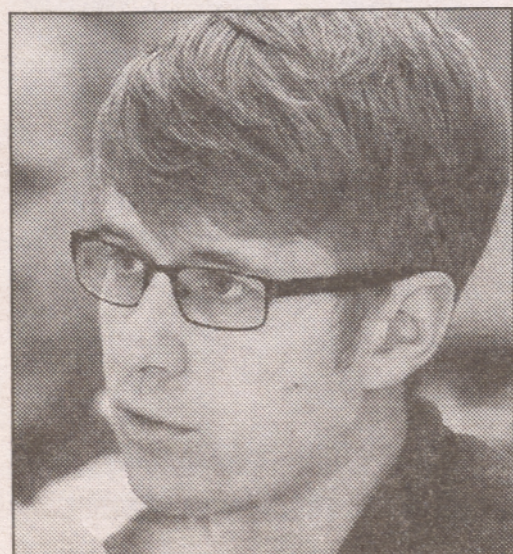
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Roy Kaufmann

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