

EDITORIAL

Oregon should support the legalization of marijuana

Being able to vote on the regulation, taxation and legalization of marijuana for recreational use in November looks like a reality in Oregon.

Oregonians should vote yes.

According to New Approach Oregon, the campaign working on the legislation, revenues generated by taxation of recreational marijuana will go towards funding schools (40%), state and local police (35%) and drug treatment, prevention and mental health funding (25%). It's projected that the revenue will be in the tens of millions of dollars.

The reality is, marijuana is already widely available in Oregon. By regulating, taxing and overseeing the sale of marijuana, Oregon can shift its resources to target drug prevention.

Under the current proposed legislation the state would regulate the amount of allowed purchase, sale, production, processing, transportation and delivery of marijuana items—as well as granting, refusing, suspending or cancelling licenses. They also would regulate operating hours, security, quality control, labeling, and other health and safety issues. The measure prohibits minors from buying, selling, manufacturing, possessing or consuming marijuana. It also prohibits minors from entering marijuana stores under penalty of losing driving privileges. Individuals would have to be 21 and over to purchase.

The reality is, marijuana is already widely available in Oregon. By regulating, taxing and overseeing the sale of marijuana, Oregon can shift its resources to target drug prevention and treatment. It will also take the profits off the sale of marijuana off the criminal market and allow hard working Oregonians to access new and emerging jobs created by legalization.

"We've got 20 states that have either explicitly authorized hemp cultivation, or they are taking steps to promote it, Oregon being one of them," Congressman Earl Blumenauer recently told Street Roots. "It's one of those moments in history that is ripe, and Oregon, this year, is poised to be the turning point nationally. We've got these two states, Colorado and Washington, which have legalized it. Everything's going to be trained on Oregon. People think that if they can beat it in Oregon, they can beat it anywhere. If it wouldn't pass in Oregon, where would it pass? If it passes, the wave will crest. We're a cheap state to campaign in, so there will be energy and attention. If it passes here, California is a foregone conclusion, as is Maine."

We look to other civic leaders and elected officials around Oregon to show courage and to be bold, understanding that this is smart and effective policy.

Let's help make history.

Under the current proposed legislation the state would regulate the amount of allowed purchase, sale, production, processing, transportation and delivery of marijuana items—as well as granting, refusing, suspending or

We are reaching a tipping point in Portland

Portland is reaching a tipping point. Couple the decline of affordable housing units with the increase rental prices from around the city and we're heading into a perfect storm. In fact, some might say the storm has already arrived on our shores. It sure feels that way.

We are dangerously close as a city to following in both Seattle and San Francisco's footsteps when it comes to becoming a city

where only concentrated wealth, (mostly white), and the most destitute live side by side.

It's not a joke that small business owners, teachers, baristas, to name a few, now have to look outside of the city just to be able to maintain a lifestyle where they aren't spending a large percentage of their income on housing alone.

Understanding that they're in the midst of a housing crisis—San Francisco voters passed a Housing Trust Fund in 2012 with a goal of building and preserving more than 30,000 affordable housing units in the city.

The fund requires that the city sets aside general fund revenues beginning in 2013-2014 and ending in Fiscal Year 2042-2043 to create, acquire and rehabilitate affordable housing and promote affordable home ownership

programs in the city.

In Seattle, where a similar setting exists, they are working hard to connect transportation, density and housing through a range of different programs. The city also has a housing levy that has been overwhelmingly supported by voters since the 1990s.

These are just a few examples.

If I've said it once in this column, I've said it a million times. We must be thinking bigger if we are going to combat the rapid economic and racial gentrification of our city. In order to do this we need leaders not thinking about the status quo, but thinking about how they are going to develop a plan to support working Oregonians.

In order to get to a more equitable Portland it's going to take more than just charity. It's going to take real infrastructure—like raising the minimum wage and creating something like a Housing Trust Fund. Currently, we are moving from year to year with patchwork like strategies that have us falling woefully behind.

The reality is if Portland wants to be a world-class city, it's going to have to take steps in these directions anyway. The question is whether we have the leadership to make that happen today instead of waiting until we can no longer even tackle the issue with a systemic approach.

We have the political will to make it happen. It's just a matter of having elected leaders who are willing to do something about it.



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DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org

An individual experiencing homelessness sleeps next to an ATM machine in downtown Portland.

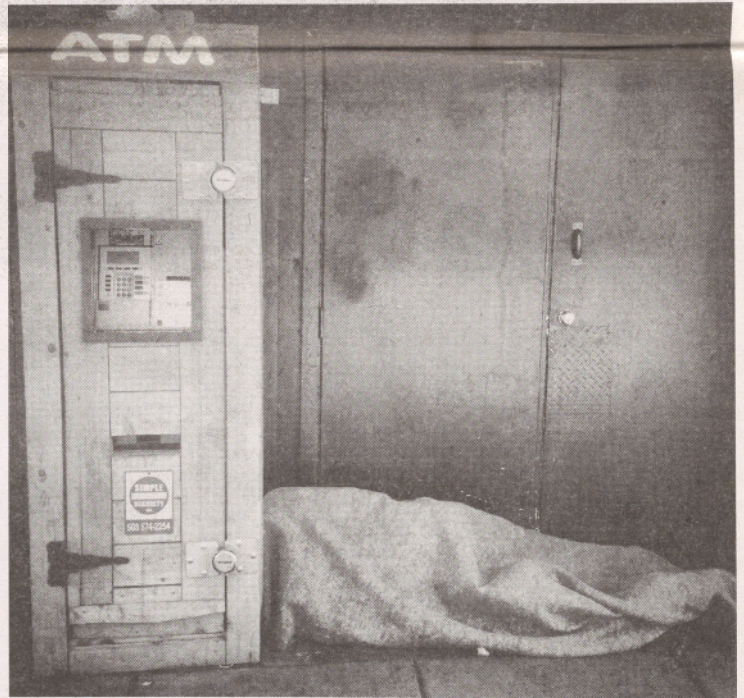


PHOTO BY ISRAEL BAYER

Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the International Network of Street Papers.

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Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting guides, call 503-228-5657. Resources are online at www.rosecityresource.org.

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Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



75¢

goes directly to the vendor who sold you the paper

25¢

goes toward printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.