

Life

by Vendor M

Not always easy.
Stay smart, be strong, happiness
is holiness.

Look Up

by Mel Taylor

Up in the clouds
is my Heaven and
where my everlasting
soul will be
Everything is
Everything just
Look up it will
Set u free.
Love and peace
M. Bear.

Do I Recognize My Shadow?

by Eileen Vizenor

I stand before a light.
I look to the wall.
I see no shadow.
I ask myself "why?"
The answer comes to me.
I see no shadow because I see no me.
The me I was in my former life no longer exists.
Only my present life exists but it has no shadow.

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said. "I have an open claim."

This past month, the Obama administration ended the monopoly the University of Mississippi had on being the only source of marijuana for research, however new sources will need to apply for licenses and new research projects will need approval from federal agencies including the DEA and FDA. This change will allow a wider variety of plant strains to be studied.

"The DEA is a nightmare. It's just completely locked into the war-on-drugs mentality," said U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon).

He's been fighting for veterans to gain access to medical marijuana by championing the cause in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"It is nonsensical for the federal government to place these restrictions on the Veterans Administration," he said.

"The VA prescribes opioids far above the national average for veterans, and they die of overdoses at singularly high rates," Blumenauer said. "It's quite clear that medical marijuana has therapeutic benefits for veterans. I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with veterans and their families who claim that this has been life-altering for them - and it doesn't carry the toxic consequence of opioids."

In March, PBS's "Frontline" reported 60 percent of veterans returning from the Middle East suffer from chronic pain, and until a few years ago, the VA was treating that pain almost exclusively with opioids. Now, according to the report, 68,000 veterans have opioid abuse disorders.

Additionally, Health Affairs published research in July showing that in states where medical marijuana is legal, prescriptions for opioid painkillers and anti-depressants are down among Medicare patients. In 2013 alone, medical marijuana was estimated to have saved taxpayers \$165.2 million in states where it is legal, the study concluded.

Blumenauer came close to getting veterans easier access to medical marijuana earlier this year when he attached an amendment to a military spending bill that would have enabled VA doctors to recommend medical marijuana as a treatment option.

The amendment had garnered the support it needed to pass in both chambers, with 57 Republicans in favor, Blumenauer said.

But in the very early morning hours of June 23, as House Democrats were holding a sit-in for gun safety following the Orlando nightclub shooting, the amendment was gutted in a conference committee chaired by Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Illinois). The funding bill

was then hastily brought up for a vote that same night. Just after 3 a.m., the House passed the legislation, with members largely unaware that the provision allowing VA doctors to prescribe marijuana in states where it is legal to do so had been removed.

While last-minute late-night legislation gutting is not a common committee tactic, it can happen. Regardless, Blumenauer said he's going to keep pushing.

But the VA's Dr. Lynam said if Blumenauer's bill were to pass today, he's not sure it would make much of a difference.

"We don't have a lot of scientific medical research literature to help guide us," he said, "and we rely on that in giving people treatment, so until that exists, I don't know how that bill would help us, really."

Ultimately, Lynam said, he wants to know more.

"We need to figure out what this stuff can do," he said.

"There's this big experiment going on out there in the community, where people are using marijuana to treat PTSD, and to treat pain and migraines and insomnia. I'm trying to understand if they are having any success, because we have very little research data that can guide us."

On Aug. 30, the American Legion, the largest military veterans organization in the U.S., passed a resolution asking Congress to at least recognize marijuana's potential for medicinal benefits and, in part, cited the DEA's approval of the MAPS study of military veterans and smoked marijuana to treat PTSD beginning this month.

But even if the results of the study do show therapeutic benefits, MAPS spokesperson Burge said it's just the beginning of what will likely be a 10- to 15-year process before marijuana is FDA approved as a prescribable drug.

"Even if all states were to approve medical marijuana, insurance companies still aren't going to cover it, doctors still aren't going to be able to prescribe it, and physicians and patients aren't going to have access to the information that they need to be able to prescribe it adequately," he said. "We're aiming at federally legal prescription access, which comes with all the additional benefits that are not covered at the state level."

In the meantime, Blumenauer said he will continue to push the federal government toward more in-touch marijuana policies.

"If we have some of the key Republican leadership opposed, it's a bit of a long shot," he said, "but ultimately, we're going to get it. A majority of both the House and the Senate support it - and it's the right thing to do."

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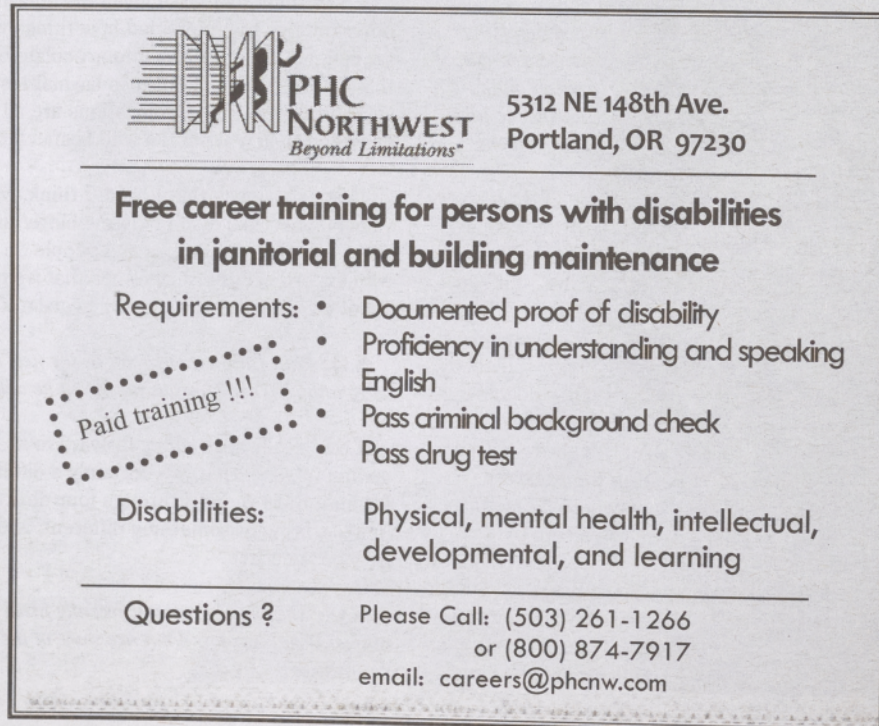


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