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Viewpoint BY JIM GREIG

End the War at Home

The war on drugs is a war on people

There are a lot of marijuana smokers in Eugene and Lane County. In the rest of Oregon too, for that matter. Doctors, lawyers, politicians, cowboys and Indians, and just plain Joes. I would guess we all know at least one person who consumes marijuana (cannabis, ganja, reefer, herb, bud).

According to the report "The Budgetary Implications of Marijuana Prohibition," from Harvard's Jeffrey Miron and endorsed by the late Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman and 500 other economists in the U.S., there are estimated to be some 300,000 adults in Oregon who at least occasionally use pot.

Suffering from a painfully crippling form of rheumatoid arthritis, I know the medical benefits of marijuana. I'm genuinely thankful for the relief it provides me – a relief no amount of prescription pills can provide. This relief isn't just physical, but is potential economic relief as well. I need to use only half of one of my most expensive prescriptions medications when I have an adequate supply of medical marijuana. That adds up to an annual savings of \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year, in my case.

But there are still those who tell me "No, it is not medicine. You sir, are a criminal." But I'm not. I'm a 55-year-old man in a wheelchair in constant excruciating



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pain. Marijuana diminishes that pain to a barely tolerable level. I have many friends with even worse medical conditions who also find cannabis extremely beneficial. In fact there are nearly 15,000 patients now registered in Oregon's Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP) and more than 2,500 Oregon-licensed physicians who have signed recommendations for patients. I say that is a very good start. I hope more new patients will soon enjoy marijuana's relieving properties this next year and beyond.

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The chief obstruction for me – and all patients nationwide – is a lack of accessibility to medical marijuana. The federal government, primarily the DEA, stands firm in opposing cannabis use and is willing to use paramilitary tactics against marijuana-using patients, even in states that have allowed its medical use.

Conversely, the government is also the only federal legal source for marijuana. Interesting to note is that "Uncle Sam" grows it for medicine at the University of Mississippi. They provide about one half pound per month to patients in the form of pre-rolled cigarettes, packaged 300 per can. Sadly, there are now only five patients left receiving this marijuana allotment under the Compassionate Investigational New Drug (CIND) program.

One of those five is Eugene resident Elvy Musikka. Elvy suffers from glaucoma and has proven the remaining vision she does have is due to her use of pot. Elvy is the contradiction in federal policy, the villager who points out that the King is wearing no clothes.

Elvy and the two dozen other CIND program participants had to prove the effectiveness of marijuana as medicine to the FDA, DEA and NIDA with extensive medical records from doctors who were pre-approved by the government. Yet they still had to fight in court to prove, as Elvy's judge ultimately stated, "that marijuana is the safest, most reliable, most efficient part of her treatment."

Because of her work, and the efforts of patients and activists around the country, we are being lead to a broader medical understanding of how cannabis works and the variety of ailments it can help alleviate. For instance there is strong evidence emerging showing it likely has anti-cancer properties.

Essential, rapidly growing support is finally coming from our elected representatives in Washington, D.C., and local elected officials around the country. Eugene is proudly joining the ranks of progressive thinkers and other compassionate communities around the country by proclaiming Saturday, May 5, as Eugene's "Medical Marijuana Awareness Day."

I ask Lane County and Eugene residents to join Elvy and other notable and/or notorious MMJ activists between 11 am and 2 pm Saturday at the Federal Building, 7th and Pearl. Help us, with over 200 other cities worldwide, to end a policy that has pitted the government against some of our sickest neighbors and family members. Help us end a policy that has become a war at home where armed men, dressed in black, can steal a patient's medicine.

Get educated, and lend your voice. It is time to end this war at home, a war pitting the government against against we, the people.

Jim Greig is a Eugene resident, OMMP medical marijuana patient/activist and board member of Voter Power.