

ACTING ON HEMP

Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley push for legalizing pot's relative

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Ever sat around, smoked a bowl and, as your high mellowed you out, decided maybe that dude you've been arguing with isn't so bad after all?

Hemp, marijuana's sober cousin, can apparently have that same effect on politicians, without the high. On April 12 (in plenty of time for 4/20) Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky teamed up with Oregon senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to introduce The Hemp Farming Act of 2018.

Often at odds over policy, the three politicians came together for the bipartisan S. 2667, which would legalize the cultivation of industrial hemp and would remove it from its classification as a Schedule I drug.

On a federal level, hemp and marijuana are not distinguished from one another. Hemp currently sits on the list of controlled substances with heroin and ecstasy, Wyden tells *Eugene Weekly*.

"It's an outdated policy," he says, "and defies common sense."

He adds that if you are smoking hemp, "it's a waste of your time and lighter fluid." Hemp has less than one

percent tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is the part that gets you high.

The Hemp Act builds on some of the gains for cannabis sativa in the 2014 Farm Bill, which included a provision allowing states to develop industrial hemp pilot projects for research purposes. Wyden, McConnell and Merkley also worked together on that bill.

Wyden says he was compelled to pursue hemp legalization after a shopping trip with his wife to a Portland Costco, where he saw hemp hearts for sale. Hemp hearts are the edible inside of hemp seed, and Wyden says the package touted their benefits — a good source of proteins, good for one's blood pressure and "a parade of good health traits," the senator says, but not grown in Oregon or anywhere else in the country. Oregon does have some laws allowing for industrial hemp production.

"If you can buy it at a supermarket in Oregon, you should be able to grow it in Oregon," Wyden says. "Farmers in China are laughing all the way to the bank."

High Times Magazine, citing the *South China Morning Post*, reported in 2017 that "a small number of Chinese

provinces, including Heilongjiang, near the Russian border, and Yunnan to the south, now make up nearly half of the world's legal hemp cultivation."

According to Wyden, American farmers have been pushing for hemp legalization "and have been for some time."

The Hemp Act would also advance research opportunities, according to the Hemp Industries Association, which says that "passage of S. 2667 will affirm the uses of hemp products, which are non-intoxicating, and open the door to research opportunities in the sector of CBD and animal product applications, and beyond."

CBD is short for cannabidiol, which has shown promise as a treatment for children with seizures. And Colorado State's Veterinary Teaching hospital is currently enrolling dogs in a study on the "efficacy of cannabidiol for the treatment of epilepsy in dogs." CBD does not get you high.

Wyden says he will push hard to get the Hemp Act added to this year's Farm Bill. He says farmers see hemp's illegality as anti-farmer, anti-jobs, anti-business and anti-common sense. ■

ACTIVIST ALERT

- St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County's **Metamorphose: Up-cycle Fashion Show** is Saturday April 21. The day of environmental competitions, activities for adults and kids, seminars, entertainment, vendors and more, begins at noon and ends at 9 pm. Organizers say, "The Metamorphose competition, along with the BRING and MECCA events, raises public awareness of the potential for creative reuse of salvaged materials." The fashion show itself and awards ceremony begins at 6 pm. Former TV anchor and seemingly obsessive self-videographer Rick Dancer will judge along with Mitra DeMirza, SVdP's resident artist, designer of its signature ENVIA fashion line and founder of Metamorphose. All events are free from noon to 5 pm. Admission to the fashion show is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children and seniors.

- Local author and harpist **Mary**

DeMocker celebrates the release of her new book, *The Parents' Guide to Climate Revolution: 100 Ways to Build a Fossil-Free Future, Raise Empowered Kids, and Still Get a Good Night's Sleep* with a foreword by Bill McKibben at 6:30 pm Thursday, April 19, at Tsunami Books, 2585 Willamette. Democker says, "I've lived in Eugene 30 years, am an alum of the UO music school, have a kid in the local high school, co-founded a thriving climate recovery organization (350 Eugene) and am releasing a book on the eve of Earth Week that has been endorsed by some of the top climate champions on the planet."

- Also on Saturday, April 21, is the **Eugene Family YMCA Healthy Kids Day** offering "pickleball, an obstacle course, swimming, educational activities, healthy food booths, give-a-ways, raffle prizes and valet

bike parking to motivate and inspire families to develop healthy routines throughout the year." The Y says, "This year's event, which falls on Earth Day, will promote bike safety and awareness with bike registration, helmet fittings and more. The event runs 10 am to noon at 2055 Patterson Street; parking is available across the street at South Eugene High School.

- **350 Eugene and Community Rights Lane County are offering Decolonizing Our Activism** 6 pm, Thursday, April 26, at First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive Street. The workshop will "explore how to be a good ally and form partnerships with the traditional stewards of this land. We must break the chain of colonial oppression of Native Americans," according to 350 Eugene. It will be presented by Sweetwater Nannauck

of Idle No More Washington. Registration and details at world.350.org/eugene.

- Local sustainability efforts will be highlighted at the **Corvallis Sustainability Coalition's** quarterly gathering noon to 1:30 pm Friday, April 27, at the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library. The gathering features presentations by Brad Attig of Corvallis Foundry, Kerstin Colón of Corvallis Multicultural Literacy Center and Erik Swartzendruber of the Willamette Valley Regenerative Landscaping Coalition, highlighting what their organizations are doing to help create a sustainable community. There will also be a presentation by David Eckert, leader of the Sustainability Coalition's Water Action Team, about the team's current projects, including the upcoming Lamprey Creek Tour.