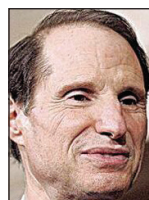


Wyden: End federal restrictions on cannabis

Oregon senator applauds passage of bill in U.S. House, while working on his own legislation to get colleagues to respond to the 'will of the voters'

PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden says it's time for Congress to lift federal cannabis restrictions dating back more than 80 years to the Great Depression.



Wyden

The Oregon Democrat made his statement after the House approved similar legislation April 1, the second time it has done so in 18 months. Wyden, who is chairman of the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee, has been working on his own version with New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. They released a draft last summer, and plan to unveil legislation after Congress returns from its Easter recess. It is known as the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer, also an Oregon Democrat, has been a champion of both House bills to do away with federal restrictions that have existed since 1937. The bills are known as the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act.

Under a 1970 law known as the Controlled Substances Act, the federal government classified marijuana as a Schedule 1 drug with no medical value, similar to heroin. It did so af-

ter then-President Richard M. Nixon declared a "war on drugs" that even its proponents concede has largely failed.

In a statement issued after the House vote, Blumenauer said:

"As we mark 50 years of the devastating War on Drugs, it is past time for Congress to catch up with the public and majority of states who have legalized some form of cannabis, and pass legislation to decriminalize the adult use of recreational cannabis."

Blumenauer was a 24-year-old state representative in 1973, when Oregon became the first state to make possession of one ounce or less punishable as an infraction — comparable to a traffic offense — and a maximum fine of \$100. Oregon voters approved a medical-use law in 1998 and full legalization in 2014, although Colorado and Washington preceded it.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Oregon is among 18 states where marijuana is legal for medical and recreational use. Twenty-nine other states have full medical marijuana programs or allow use of cannabis components with low or no psychoactive chemicals that induce intoxication. Only Idaho, Kansas and Nebraska

bar public access to any form of cannabis, other than hemp, whose status was changed by a federal law in 2018.

"Ending federal cannabis prohibition is urgent business," Wyden said in a tweet. "I congratulate the House on passing this bill and I urge my Senate colleagues to support my legislation . . . It's past time for Congress to listen to the will of the voters."

Senate roadblock

But the latest legislation, whether it's the House bill or Wyden's draft bill, faces a highly uncertain future in an evenly divided Senate — where 60 votes are needed to pass something that is not budget-related or an executive or judicial appointment.



Marina Riker/Associated Press, File

A marijuana plant.

During a speech April 6 in support of Ketanji Brown Jackson's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court, Wyden criticized Republicans who say that matters such as abortion rights should be left to states as a conservative majority on the high court appears poised to restrict or overturn its 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*.

"If Republicans believed in states' rights, they'd respect the right of Democratic states to pass gun safety laws. They'd respect the right of states to legalize marijuana. They'd respect the right of states to ensure we have clean air and water," Wyden said. "But Republicans oppose all of those priorities, challenge those laws in federal court and undermine them in Congress."

House action

The latest House bill (HR 3617) went to the Senate on a 220-204 vote mostly along party lines. Just three Republicans joined Democrats to vote for it; two Democrats voted with Republicans against it.

A similar bill passed the House in a December 2020 post-election session. Its chief significance was that it was a

step toward ending cannabis prohibition that has been in effect since 1937, when Congress made possession of it illegal unless someone paid a tax for federal permits that were unavailable.

That bill did not come to a vote in the Senate.

The House passed another bill (HR 1996), known as the SAFE Act, almost a year ago to remove barriers that cannabis-related businesses face in using the banking system, such as conducting many transactions in cash. A 321-101 vote, with all Democrats in favor and Republicans split 106-101, sent that bill to the Senate, where it has not moved.

Blumenauer had this to say after the latest House vote: "The MORE Act decriminalizes cannabis at the federal level and provides restorative justice for communities which have suffered from the disproportionate and deliberate enforcement of cannabis prohibitions. Today's vote to pass the MORE Act in the U.S. House of Representatives is one step to ending the deplorable, misguided War on Drugs. It is also a critical turning point."

"I have spent time talking to parents of children with seizure disorders, veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), small businesses, and the very communities who have been unfairly impacted by the War on Drugs, and they all agree: The federal government must end the failed prohibition on marijuana.

"Today's passage of the MORE Act brings us one step closer to winning the fight"

La Grande man, Baker County mine featured on reality TV show

BY DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A popular Discovery reality show is bringing a La Grande man to the small screen.

Pete Candlish appears in an episode of "Gold Rush: Freddy Dodge's Mine Rescue" now airing on the Discovery Channel.

The reality program, which according to Dodge's Facebook page has an audience of at least 1 million viewers a week, features mining experts Dodge and Juan Ibarra who visit mines throughout the United States to show those operating them how to do so more effectively.

Dodge and Ibarra will be shown at the Sanger Mine in Baker County working with miners including Pete Candlish, who is helping operate the mine for its owners who live in Western Oregon, during the one-hour episode.

Candlish is a hobby miner who owns stakes near the Sanger Mine and has been a fan of "Gold Rush: Freddy Dodge's Mine Rescue" since the series began. He said he "was shocked" when the owners of Sanger Mine called him up and offered him a chance to appear on the TV program.

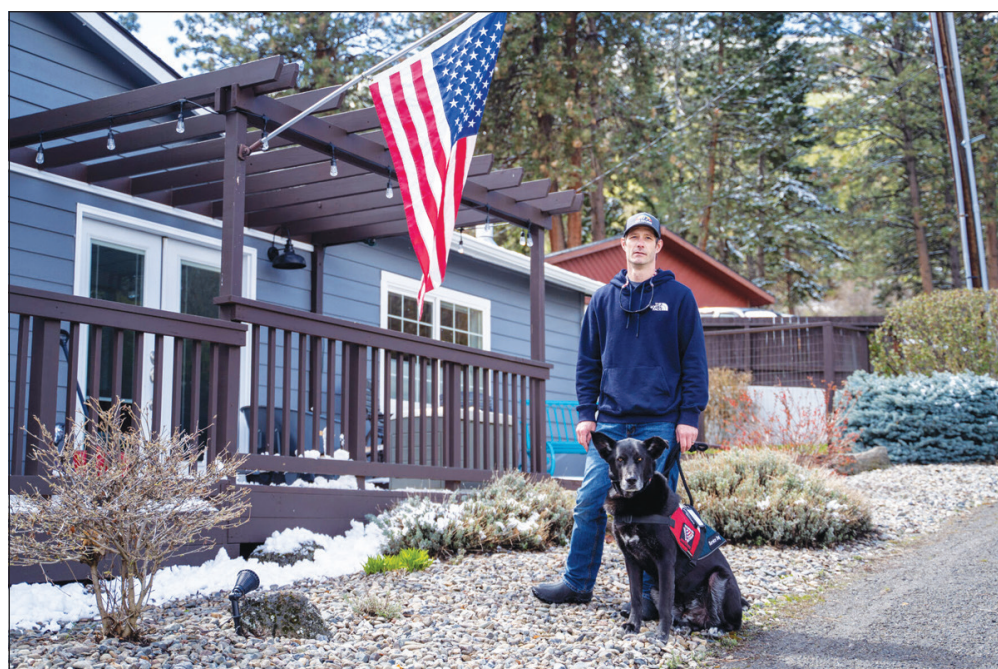
"I couldn't believe it. I was totally surprised," said Candlish, who quickly took the owners up on their offer.

His wife, Stacy, and daughter, Adalynn, 7, were not at the mine when the program was filmed, but a photo of them is shown during the episode, titled "Dial F for Freddy."

The show was recorded at Sanger Mine in June of 2021 over a 10-day stretch.

"Sometimes they filmed for an hour and only a minute of the footage appeared in the show," Candlish said.

He said he learned a great



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Pete Candlish, along with his service dog Woodrow, are set to star in an episode of Discovery's "Gold Rush: Freddy Dodge's Mine Rescue."

deal about mining over the 10-day period.

"They showed me things like how the configurations of sluice boxes can make a big difference in how much gold you can get," Candlish said.

Sluices are long, narrow boxes that water passes through when put in a creek or stream. Sluicing is a method of separating and recovering gold from gravel by the use of running water.

Mining as therapy

Pete Candlish started mining while with the U.S. Coast Guard 10 years ago in Alaska and does it as a hobby to help him cope with post-traumatic stress syndrome.

"It is great therapy for me. It helps me with physical and mental healing," said Candlish, who talks about this during the television show.

The program about Sanger Mine is available to watch on subscription streaming

services, including Discovery Plus, and Candlish said he has received a number of calls and messages from veterans who have seen it. They indicated that the program helped them deal with the challenges they are facing.

"That has been gratifying to hear," Candlish said.

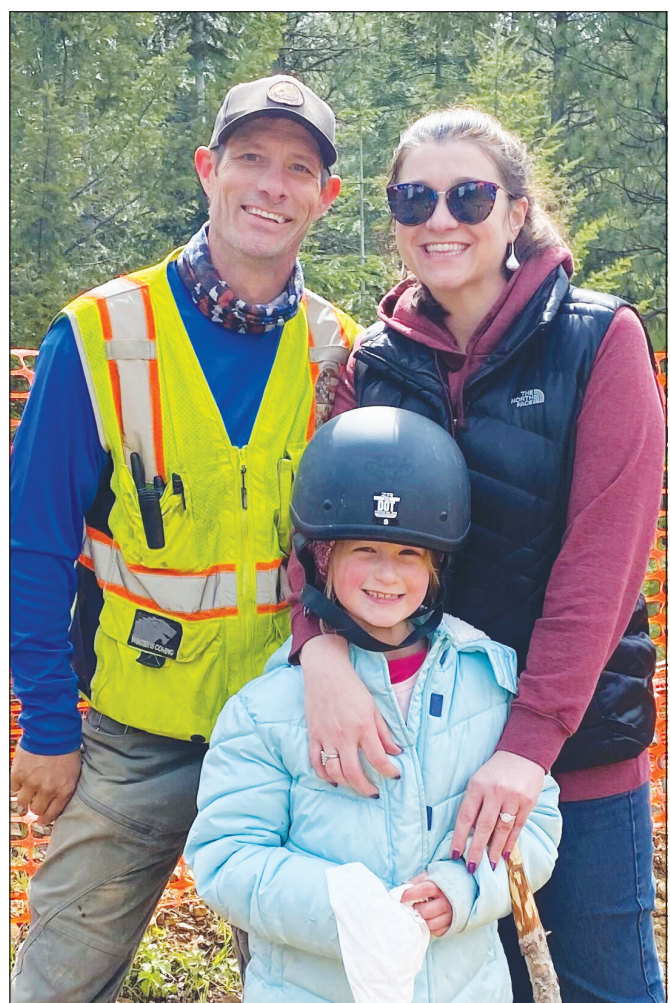
Another reason Candlish is so drawn to mining is that

each time someone spots gold they are doing something historic because the odds are no person has seen it before.

"You are probably the first person to ever see it," he said.

Candlish is optimistic that there is more to be found in the mines of Baker County.

"There is still gold out there that the old-timers didn't get," Candlish said.



Pete Candlish/Contributed Photo

Pete Candlish, left, along with his wife Stacy and daughter Adalynn, 7, pose for a photo while working on the Discovery show "Gold Rush" which will feature a Baker County mine this Friday.

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