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Pot Promoters Pitch Platform Legal Marijuana Use for Midland's Citizens?

By Ursula Ellison

CENTERTOWN, MIDLAND – Over the last few years, several states have legalized medicinal and recreational marijuana. Though such laws are technically in violation of federal laws and regulations, the current administration has not used executive or judicial power to challenge any of the new laws.

Organizations like *Make Pot Legal Now!*, directed by Mr. James Franklin, are actively attempting to strengthen the case for the legalization here in Midland. In particular, there was a significant gathering Saturday at Centertown's Richland Square. The business district might not have seemed a natural gathering place for pot enthusiasts; however, many local businesses are looking for ways to capitalize on the recent changes in public sentiment. In particular, if marijuana becomes a legal drug for adults, retail sellers will have to find ways to operate in compliance with Centertown, Midland, and U.S. law. There are, as the members of the State of Washington's businesses have discovered, many potential pitfalls.

For instance, this organization's proposal does not permit public consumption of marijuana in the city. Just like public drinking is both legally and ethically discouraged, public use of pot will not be permitted. However, just as there are retailers that sell beer, wine and liquor despite public consumption being restricted, there will, we can suppose, be retailers that will sell a variety of marijuana products despite the restriction of its use.

Should the laws against drinking in public serve as the laws against smoking marijuana in public?

What about the other means by which marijuana can be consumed? Surely there are those who violate the drinking law by surreptitious concealment; what's to stop those who prefer consuming marijuana in edible form rather than via smoking? A great many people can identify the odor of pot smoke, and reports to police could result in arrest. But, are people really going to start reporting anyone enjoying a lollipop?

At Saturday's gathering, Mr. Franklin and others offered attendees pamphlets, stickers and buttons. They also had a television under a canopy playing a looped recording of a video supporting their goals.

I sat down with Mr. Franklin for a few minutes in the heat of the afternoon and asked him for a few specific reasons why such a law would be good for Midland. Specifically, as there is no clear support for the law in the House, Senate or in the governor's office, I asked why this state, rather than one with a more eagerly supportive government, would be *Make Pot Legal Now!*'s choice.

"Ms. Harrison's obstructionist policies will only lead to greater dissatisfaction for the people of Midland," he said. "Furthermore, this is what the people want. Whether the legislators, tied up in the pockets of lobbyists, or the governor, herself compromised by business interests, want to try to stop us, this law is going to pass, and the people of Midland are going to have what they want: legal access to a safe, widely-accepted adult drug."

This is a newspaper, which is a fine resource. However, the article has to be taken at face value. It is neither an editorial nor an advertisement. Students may comment on this.

At the end of the first column, a series of questions are asked which, in truth, are designed to motivate the students to consider their own views. In part, the author of the article is playing her hand, showing the reader some of her own beliefs. Students may pick up on this. But, students might also get off track responding to those questions.

The short description of Mr. Franklin's team and their campaigning efforts is designed to paint a picture in the students' minds, but it's also there to illustrate again that the organization is trying to persuade people to believe and vote a certain way.

It might be relevant, depending upon how the students respond, that Midland is described as having governmental bodies that aren't in support of this proposal. It also creates a tension.

Franklin begins by being off-putting and confrontational. Students should pick up on this. His claim that "the people" want this is certainly subject to criticism. He also attacks the persons themselves when he claims that the legislators are in the pockets of lobbyists and when he claims the governor is compromised.

He claims that marijuana is safe and that it's widely accepted, he offers nothing here that verifies either.