Congressmen Call for Probe of Justice Department

Members of Congress want an investigation of federal prosecutors who continue to pursue medical cannabis cases despite restrictions placed on them last year. Reps. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and Sam Farr (D-CA) sent a letter on July 30 to DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz, asking him “to investigate potential violations of the Anti-Deficiency Act by the Department with regard to its prosecution and other enforcement actions against persons and businesses conducting legitimate medical marijuana activities under state law.”

CARERS Act Gains Powerful Co-Sponsors

The CARERS Act, the first comprehensive medical cannabis legislation to be considered by Congress, is up to 15 bipartisan co-sponsors in the Senate, now that two influential senior senators have added their names. Chuck Schumer of New York and Barbara Mikulski of Maryland each became co-sponsors of SB 683 at the end of July.

Sen. Mikulski is the ranking member of the powerful Appropriations Committee and was instrumental in preserving the Rohrabacher-Farr Amendment that limits federal interference in state medical cannabis laws. Sen. Schumer is the third ranking Democrat in the Senate with a reputation as an ardent supporter of the War on Drugs.

The legislation authored by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) was originally co-sponsored by Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) and the junior senator from New York, Kirsten Gillibrand (D). Other co-sponsors include senators from the states of California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Wisconsin. The bill is currently in the hands of the Senate Judiciary Committee, but committee chair Charles Grassley (R-IA) has yet to set hearings.

“Medical marijuana is the only recourse for many in New York and across the country who are in a great deal of pain,” Sen. Schumer said in a statement. “It is only humane and fair that they have access to the treatment they need when prescribed by a doctor.”

New Medical Cannabis Laws in Washington

Several medical cannabis bills were passed by the Washington State legislature or went into effect last month. The measures were part of policymakers’ attempt to harmonize the state’s existing medical cannabis program with the new law that allows anyone who is at least 21 years of age to purchase and use cannabis. Among the changes is the name of the regulatory agency. The state Liquor Control Board keeps its 81-year-old acronym but the ‘C’ now stands for ‘Cannabis,’ as in Liquor and Cannabis Board.

Of the bills, the most wide-reaching is SB 5052, which brings much of the state’s largely unregulated medical cannabis operations under the umbrella of the new adult-use regulations while allowing qualified patients to continue personal cultivation and possess larger quantities than non-medical consumers. Households will now be limited to the cultivation of 15 plants. To qualify for the additional amounts and protections, qualifying patients must register in the state’s new voluntary database, which law enforcement will be able to access to confirm registrations. This bill also expanded the qualifying medical conditions to include post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries but creates restrictions that will shut down many of the state’s existing medical cannabis businesses. The bill also specifies that qualifying patients between the ages of 18 and 21 will be able to purchase cannabis at retail locations with a medical endorsement.

State support for cannabis research was created by SB 5121, which establishes a licensing program for the purchase and use of cannabis. Amon...
New York Officials Announce Five Licensees

In what Health Commissioner Dr. Howard A. Zucker called “a major milestone” for the state’s medical cannabis program, New York has announced five companies that will be licensed to operate dispensaries and cultivation facilities. Forty-three had applied.

The five selected firms for the state are Bloomfield Industries Inc., Columbia Care NY LLC, Empire State Health Solutions, Etain LLC, PharmaCann LLC. Each will have a single cultivation facility and four retail dispensing locations in different cities.

The firms selected are to have medical cannabis products, which will be subject to a 7 percent tax, available by Jan. 1. The Compassionate Care Act was signed into law by Gov. Andrew Cuomo last July.

First Nevada Cannabis Dispensary Opens

On the last day of July, Nevada’s first medical cannabis dispensary opened in Sparks, just a few miles east of Reno. Of the two dozen states that allow medical cannabis use, Nevada is one of the few that recognizes patients who are registered to use cannabis in their home state.

Since the state legislature adopted rules for distribution operations two years ago, 66 dispensary licenses have been issued. The Sparks City Council approved dispensaries last year, with Silver State Relief the first to begin serving patients.

In the 15 years since state voters okayed medical use, registered patients or their caregivers could only access medical cannabis by growing up to 12 plants themselves, which they may continue to do.

Nevada’s new distribution regulations include "seed-to-sale" tracking similar to Colorado’s. The state Department of Agriculture is finalizing a testing process that will screen for dozens of common pesticides.

ACTION ALERT: Five Things to Do this Summer

1. Host or Attend an Educational Session
   Three workshop sessions are available in ASA’s Truth About Medical Marijuana Educational Series. We’ll send you everything you need for a successful meeting, including a video, engagement materials, and a survey.

2. Engage your Senators about the CARERS Act
   Constituents are 6x more effective than lobbyists. Urge your senators to support the CARERS Act, the comprehensive federal medical cannabis legislation. Visit their local Senate office or take five minutes to call and demand their support for patients.

3. Sign the CARERS Act Petition and Gather Signatures
   Go to safeaccessnow.org/carers to sign the CARERS Act petition today. Then download the petition, gather more signatures, and send them back to ASA.

4. Become an ASA member
   Membership matters! ASA is a grassroots organization, so your support helps medical cannabis legally available for everyone who can benefit from it. Join us today!

5. Build the movement!
   Print 10 copies of our outreach poster and post them in your community. Download the ASA Outreach Poster at safeaccessnow.org/outreach.

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Israel to Expand Program, Offer Cannabis in Pharmacies

Long a leader in cannabis research, Israel will soon make medical cannabis available through pharmacies in the country and expand the number of physicians who are authorized to prescribe it. The announcement was made in the Knesset by Israel’s deputy health minister, Yaakov Litzman, head of an ultra-orthodox party. Before the Health Ministry can license more growers to supply the pharmacies, the country’s Supreme Court must sign off.

The 22,000 Israelis who are authorized to use medical cannabis must acquire it directly from government-authorized farms. Allowing more physicians to prescribe the medicine is intended to eliminate the wait list that is currently a barrier to access. Israel has more medical users per capita than any other country.

Italy’s Army Cultivating Cannabis for Patients

The Italian army is currently growing medical cannabis in a military pharmaceutical facility in Florence, with plans to make 100 kilos of medicine available to patients by the end of the year. Medical cannabis has been legal in Italy since 2007, but the country currently imports from the Netherlands about 50 kilos of medical cannabis each year for distribution through Italian pharmacies.

Italians with cancer, multiple sclerosis or chronic pain may obtain a prescription for cannabis from a physician. Demand for medical cannabis in Italy has reportedly skyrocketed in the past year.

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mechanism for studying cannabis, including establishing potency, testing cannabis-based products, exploring potential treatments, and conducting agricultural research. Studies are to be approved by the state’s Life Sciences Discovery Fund Authority.

Cities and counties in Washington State will enjoy a share of the tax revenues to be generated by sale of cannabis, medical or otherwise, thanks to HB 2136.