



Americans for Safe Access

ACTIVIST NEWSLETTER

Defending Patients' Access to Medical Marijuana

DECEMBER 2021

Volume 17, Issue 12

ASA Alerts California Healthcare on New Access Law

ASA launched a campaign this month to help implement California's SB311 or "Ryan's Law," which requires all healthcare facilities in the state to allow terminal patients to use cannabis on site. ASA notified state facilities that the law goes into effect January 1, 2022, and provided tools to help them comply.

Ryan's Law applies to all California healthcare facilities, including acute care hospitals, special hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, congregate living health facilities, and hospice providers. Physicians with terminally ill patients need only to provide the same recommendation that is written for qualification of The Compassionate Use Act.

"California physicians need to know that medical cannabis is an effective palliative care treatment and should aid their patients in utilizing Ryan's Law to improve their quality in end of life care," said Dr. Larry Bedard, an emergency physician on the Marin Health Care Board of Directors who testified on behalf of

Ryan's Law before the Senate and Assembly Health Committees.



Ryan's law was passed in honor of Ryan Bartell, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer at the age of 41. As his condition progressed, he was admitted to the palliative wing of a hospital where he was given the powerful opioid fentanyl to treat his pain for a month, but the hospital refused to let him use cannabis.

Fortunately, his family was able to locate a hospital that would allow Ryan to use cannabis. There, he was able to spend the last two-and-a-half weeks of his life lucid and free of suffering.

ASA's Ryan's Law implementation guide was sent to more than 2,000 California healthcare facilities. It includes a summary of the law, sam-

ple policies and documents, and standard operating procedures to aid in compliance.

ASA has also created resources for physicians and their patients to help navigate the new law, including information on patient requirements, links to sample written recommendations, and CME courses on cannabis. For patients who encounter facilities refusing to comply, ASA has set up an online reporting system and a designated email account ryanslaw@safearcressnow.org.

PFC Offers 25% Holiday Discount and Free Guide



ASA's Patient Focused Certification program is offering a special holiday discount on all trainings. Use code HOLIDAY25 to receive 25% off any PFC training when you sign up online.

In response to a spate of recent robberies of cannabis businesses, PFC is also providing free access to the Robbery Preparedness materials that are a part of the PFC Business Operations training. The Robbery Preparedness Guide was created to aid businesses in developing plans to stay safe during robberies and adopt policies to help prevent theft.

New Episode Out of the Cannabis Enigma Podcast

A new Cannabis Enigma podcast is available at safeaccessnow.org/podcasts.



In the latest episode, Itai Rogel, VP of Business Development at Bazelet, an Israeli cannabis company, talks about developments in Israel and the cannabis industry at large, and explains what happened with the legalization measures that were meant to be passed a year ago.

ASA's Executive Director Debbie Churgai is featured in the regulation segment following the interview with Rogel.

The Cannabis Enigma podcast is produced by The Cannigma in partnership with Americans For Safe Access.

Malta First in Europe to Legalize

In mid-December, Malta became the first European country to legalize cannabis for anyone 18 or older, on a parliamentary vote of 36-27.

Cannabis has been decriminalized for personal use in several other European nations, including Portugal, Austria, Italy and others.

The groundbreaking harm-reduction law permits residents of the small Mediterranean island to legally cultivate four plants, keep up to 50 grams at home and possess 7 grams in public.

Anyone convicted of a cannabis offense now considered legal will be able to easily expunge it from their record.

The nation's half-a-million citizens will be able to legally access cannabis products and seeds through non-commercial cannabis clubs with up to 500 members.

Possession of more than 7 grams but less than ounce of cannabis will be a non-criminal infraction subject to no more than a fine of 50-100 Euro. Minors caught with cannabis will be referred to counseling.

Cannabis Reforms Stripped from Bill

 A budget amendment that would have given state-licensed cannabis businesses access to banking and other financial services was killed in the Senate. The House amendment to the annual defense appropriations bill incorporated language from the SAFE Banking bill, which would allow state-licensed cannabis business to legally access financial services. The SAFE Banking bill has passed the House but languished in the Senate.

Senate Leader Chuck Schumer (D, NY), who

was reportedly responsible for stripping the banking amendment from the defense bill, issued a statement saying he is working with Sens. Corey Booker (D, NJ) and Ron Wyden (D, OR) to pass the comprehensive Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act, which contains similar provisions along with a host of other reforms.

Both Republican and Democrat members of the House publicly urged President Biden to take executive action to immediately reform federal cannabis law.

Americans for Safe Access • 1629 K Street NW, Suite 300 • Washington, D.C. 20006

202-857-4272 • info@AmericansForSafeAccess.org • www.AmericansForSafeAccess.org

Activists Profile: Chris Conrad & Mikki Norris, California

The San Francisco Bay Area holds a place in history as the center of grassroots organizing that made medical cannabis legal. Among the committed activists who propelled that movement are Chris Conrad and Mikki Norris, a couple who have each contributed their ideas and talents in a wide variety of ways, including working with Americans for Safe Access.

For nearly four decades, Chris and Mikki have taken a three-pronged approach, devising separate strategies to advocate for hemp, medical access, and adult legalization. They contributed to the campaigns to pass the first state medical cannabis law, California's Proposition 215, in 1996 and others since then.

Prop 215 made personal use, possession and cultivation of cannabis legal under California law for qualified patients, but the means of distribution and other details were left vague in the voter initiative, so years of litigation ensued. As state courts defined the limits of the law, Chris was a central player, testifying as an expert witness in cases that shaped the nascent program, including the precedent-setting decisions in *Mower* (2002) and *Kelly* (2010).

Chris was able to fill that role because of his unusual experience working for years in Europe, including the legal cannabis market in the Netherlands, left him uniquely situated to provide testimony about plant counts and canopy yields.

"Lots of people had experience with cannabis cultivation then, but almost no one in the U.S. had done so legally," says Chris. "Because I had worked in the Netherlands where it was legal, prosecutors couldn't discredit me on the stand as a criminal."

Since then, Chris has worked on more than 2,500 cases and testified before more than 350 state, federal and military courts. Advocating for people who use cannabis medicinally is a priority.

"In war, the first thing you do is get the wounded off the field of battle," Chris says. "The sick and the dying shouldn't be in the line of fire in the drug war."



Educating people about the many uses of cannabis and hemp has been central to their efforts since 1988. The year Prop 215 went into effect, Chris published *Hemp for Health*, which has been translated into six languages. His latest book, coauthored with Jeremy Daw, is the *Newbies Guide to Cannabis and the Industry*. Chris and Mikki have also helped share cannabis-related news with other activists and the general public. From 2008 to 2013, they published *The West Coast Leaf* and launched theLeafOnline.

Education remains central to Chris and Mikki's advocacy work. Together they founded Friends of Prop 64 to provide public education in support of the campaign for an adult-use initiative in California.

Organizing was also key to Chris and Mikki's work. They formed the American Hemp Council in the late 1980s and, following the 2001 federal raids on licensed providers, the organization Safe Access Now to advocate for reasonable implementation of California's medical cannabis law.

When they went to register that name as a URL, they discovered that safeaccessnow.org had just been claimed, so they ended up with safeaccessnow.net. Just days later at a Bay Area organizing meeting for medical cannabis activists, they learned who had the .org URL – the new patient advocacy organization Americans for Safe Access.

"It was a funny moment at that meeting when they announced the website," says Chris. "So you're who got it! What are the odds we'd both come up with that at the same time and in the same place?"

That coincidence was the start of collaboration and cross-pollination of strategies between ASA and Chris and Mikki.

Back in 1995, Chris and Mikki, working with the late Virginia Resner, had created the photo exhibit Human Rights and the Drug War to put faces on the individuals whose lives had been ruined by law enforcement. They traveled the US and Europe with that exhibit and then turned it into the book *Shattered Lives: Portraits from America's Drug War*.

Working with ASA, Mikki created a similar publication focused on medical cannabis patients: *Patients in the Crossfire: Casualties in the War on Medical Marijuana*. The dramatic stories of the individual patients and providers served as a lobbying tool for successful state campaigns across the US. Mikki has continued on that tack with the Cannabis Consumers Campaign, which encourages people to break-down stigma by showing the diversity of cannabis users.

"I've always thought about cannabis and other drugs as a human rights issue," says Mikki. "We still have work to do to secure civil rights. People shouldn't lose the right to employment, housing, or parenting because they use cannabis, but that's still happening."

With changes in the laws and growing normalization of cannabis use have come changes in Chris and Mikki's concerns. They have been exploring the role of cannabis as a low-dose homeopathic remedy and wellness aid, and recently they have been leading workshops on cannabis spirituality, or cannamaste. Yet they also see the work begun that is yet undone.

"We have to get the prisoners out," says Mikki. "No one should be in prison for cannabis."

Action Alert: No Patient Left Behind!

This holiday season we are reminded once again of the millions of people who are still without safe access. In 2022 we must ensure laws are changed to expand medical cannabis access, ensure that patient access to a variety of products is prioritized, and protect the civil rights of medical cannabis patients nationwide. ALL Americans should have safe, legal, and affordable access to medical cannabis in 2022. Take action now at safeaccessnow.org/nopatientleftbehind. #NoPatientLeftBehind

JOIN TODAY!

YES! Please accept my donation

(check one) Monthly One-time \$100 \$50 \$35 Other Amount \$_____

Name _____ Check or Money Order Enclosed.

Address _____ Visa Mastercard AmEx Discover

City, State, Zip _____ Card Number: _____

Phone _____ Signature: _____

Email: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV Security Code: _____

Mail to: Americans for Safe Access, 1629 K Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20006

www.AmericansForSafeAccess.org