



# Americans for Safe Access

Activist Newsletter

Defending Patients' Access to Medical Marijuana

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## ASA's Unity 2016 Brings Experts and Advocates to DC



Beginning Friday, March 18, medical cannabis advocates from across the country will gather in Washington, DC for ASA's Unity Conference 2016: Patient Advocacy Harmonizing Medical Cannabis Policy and Reality.

Those attending the conference at the Lowes Madison Hotel will have an opportunity to network with other patients, providers, activists, and medical and legal professionals from around the country. Following the conference on Tuesday, March 22, conference participants and other advocates will head to Capitol Hill for ASA's annual Lobby Day to share with Congress what they learned at Unity 2016.

"This will go down in history as one of the most significant years ever for medical cannabis policy," said ASA Executive Director Steph Sherer. "We have an incredible opportunity to set in motion policies and laws that will

result in safe access globally. No advocate should miss this chance to be part of history!"

The goals of this year's conference include preparing for the coming change in federal administration, bringing patients to DC to meet with their elected representatives about passing comprehensive federal legislation, and finalizing recommendations that will be submitted to the upcoming United Nation meetings on drug policy.



After a welcome reception Friday evening, ASA's annual conference kicks off Saturday morning with a keynote address from a leading authority in the field of cannabis research, Dr. Lumir Ondřej Hanuš. Dr. Hanuš, the Czech chemist who with William Devane first identified a key element of the endogenous cannabinoid system, has been awarded multiple honorary degrees and received many awards for his work on natural chemistry.

## Australia Passes Medical Cannabis Law

Australia has joined the club of countries that allow medical cannabis. In a legislative push that took just eight weeks, the Australian Parliament last month amended the Narcotic Drugs Act to allow medical cannabis to be cultivated and distributed through pharmacies.

"This is an historic day for Australia and the many advocates who have fought long and hard to challenge the stigma around medicinal cannabis products so genuine patients are no longer treated as criminals," Minister for Health Sussan Ley said in a statement.

Lawmakers noted that the law was changed on the first anniversary of the death of 25-year-old Daniel Haslam, who used medical cannabis to manage the symptoms of bowel cancer. Haslam's mother, Lucy, had petitioned the government to make his medicine legal and formed the group United in Compassion.

"It is incredibly fitting that today we are passing this bill which is one step towards making medicinal cannabis accessible to people like Dan," Sen. Richard Di Natale said on the floor

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## Advocates Bring Patient Issues to UN

Advocates for medical cannabis patients met last month in New York to prepare for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS 2016) on drug policy to be held April 19-21. ASA Executive Director Steph Sherer and Michael Krawitz, Executive Director of Veterans For Medical Cannabis Access, joined organizations from across the globe at the UN Headquarters to urge that medical cannabis be included in the global policies document to be presented at UNGASS 2016.

On the agenda for UNGASS 2016 is a review of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. The last UN special session in 1999 focused on eliminating illegal drugs and drug trafficking, but many international leaders and drug policy

reform groups are encouraging the UN to abandon what has proven to be an ineffective approach to drug policy.

The current international classification of cannabis as having no medical use dates to 1972 and is based on a report created by the Health Committee of the League of Nations in 1935. The UN Single Convention treaty has been used to derail attempts to reform national medical cannabis laws and research in the US and elsewhere.

At an international conference in Prague last March, representatives of organizations of medical cannabis patients from 13 countries established the International Medical Cannabis Patient Coalition (IMCPC) and drafted a Declaration for UNGASS 2016 that calls for rescheduling cannabis, along with other actions to support medical access.

Following the keynote, conference attendees have a wealth of expert panels to pick from. The session on "What Happens When Medical Cannabis is Rescheduled?" will cover the history of how cannabis has been classified, the mechanisms to reschedule and the national and international impacts of that change.

The panel on "Status of Control of Legal Production of Cannabis for Medical & Scientific Purposes" will look at the how regulations for medical access and hemp cultivation and manufacturing are being implemented around the world, including in North and South America, Europe, Israel, and Australia.

In "Extracting Flowers, Stalks, Seeds, and DNA: Cannabis Extracts and their Uses," attendees will learn methods of extraction, scientifically accurate names for cannabis varieties, how to use various extracts and preparations.

During the sessions on "Utilizing ASA Tools for Advocacy and Activism" and "Advocacy & Activism in Scientific Societies & Trade Associations," attendees will gain new tools and resources for communicating their message.

On Sunday, March 20, the informative panels begin with "Next Generation Research and Innovations in Cannabis Patient Care." Then, in "Reality-based Cannabis Risk Considerations," attendees will learn how to critically

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# PFC Persuades Local Officials to Stop Ban

Last month, efforts by ASA and its Patient Focused Certification program persuaded San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors to abandon a planned ban on commercial cannabis cultivation. The ban would have been one of a spate of such measures passed by cities and counties trying to avoid the consequences of a "drafting error" in California's recently passed state law for regulating commercial medical cannabis activities.

ASA simultaneously lobbied the county supervisors to adopt robust regulations and the state legislature to fix the error.

The Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act (AB 243), originally said if localities had not enacted regulations for medical cannabis operations by March 1, 2016, the rules would be set by the state of California. Dozens of cities and counties quickly banned all cultivation and distribution as a result.

On December 15, the San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors had directed county staff to prepare an emergency ordinance to prohibit commercial cannabis cultivation and allow for only a limited amount of personal cultivation.

ASA lobbying helped enact AB21, which removed the March 1 deadline, early last month. A week later, with the pressure of the deadline removed, the San Luis Obispo Supervisors dropped the planned ban in favor of developing a comprehensive commercial cultivation ordinance. One of the supervisors had praise for ASA's efforts.

"I want to thank the folks that gave me this Patient Focused Certification booklet yesterday," said Supervisor Frank Mecham. "I read it last night and there is a lot of good information in there that I would think that we can incorporate into whatever ordinance we put into place."

# Pennsylvania State House Finally Set to Vote

**PA** The past few years, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives has been where medical cannabis bills go to die. But nine months after the commonwealth's Senate once again overwhelmingly approved a bipartisan medical cannabis bill, the House is poised to finally bring SB 3 to a vote when they return from recess this month.

Gov. Tom Wolf has been supportive of efforts to get a medical cannabis law passed, and when the vote was announced in February, state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale

released a statement urging lawmaker to "swiftly pass SB 3" because "[i]t is the correct and compassionate thing to do."

"For the sake of thousands of Pennsylvania children and adults, the time is long past for the General Assembly to pass legislation to allow for the medical use of marijuana," DePasquale's statement says. "For many people suffering from debilitating seizures, uncontrollable pain, nausea from chemotherapy and a host of other ailments, medical marijuana could be life-changing, if not life-saving."

## AMERICANS FOR SAFE ACCESS

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interpret controversial drug abuse studies that have a big impact on shaping public policy.

Standards for producing safe and reliable cannabis products are the focus of the panel "Overview of Quality Assurance of Medicinal Cannabis," including the 11 states that have adopted regulations based on tools such as Patient Focused Certification (PFC), ISO17025, the American Herbal Products Association Recommendations for Regulators, and the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia Cannabis monograph.

On Monday, conference participants will break out in four successive sets of Workshops and Extended Learning sessions to gain new skills and information, including strategic messaging, meeting facilitation, citizen lobbying, influencing legislation and regulations, working with officials, and various state laws.

After those breakout sessions will be a panel discussion, "Federal Legislation 2016: What is at Stake?" Monday will also be when medical professionals can gain CME credits in a course covering Cannabis Care Certification, the endocannabinoid system and cannabinoids in pain management. Monday night features ASA's annual Awards Dinner honoring leading champions and advocates with the ASA Excellence Awards.

ASA's Unity 2016 conference concludes Tuesday with breakfast and short closing remarks. Then everyone will travel to Capitol Hill for a press conference and group photo, before fanning out to lobby their elected officials. Conference spots remain available.

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of Parliament. "Thank you to Lucy for everything you have done. Please know that your family's grief, pain and suffering has not been in vain and this is a legacy that Dan will leave here in Parliament."

Australian officials must still devise regulations and issue licenses before patients get access, a process that is expected to take at least six months. How those licenses will be defined remains unknown, but separate licenses for research cultivation and medical cultivation and distribution are likely.

The amendment calls for "a medicinal formulation of cannabis" to be identified, which is underway at the University of Sydney, thanks to a \$24 million donation for studies on treating severe epilepsy, palliative pain, and nausea associated with chemotherapy.

## ACTION ALERT: Join Us Mar 18-22 to Learn & Lobby

Register today to join us in Washington, D.C. for the 2016 National Medical Cannabis Unity Conference and lobby Congress on the CARERS Act, the most comprehensive federal legislation on medical cannabis ever introduced.

The Lobby Day follows three days of informative panels on best practices and other developments in the medical cannabis industry, as well as fun networking events with other patients, providers, activists, and medical and legal professionals from around the country. You can register online now at [NationalMedicalCannabisUnityConference.org](http://NationalMedicalCannabisUnityConference.org)!

## JOIN TODAY!

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