



Congress Extends Patient Protections through December



Federal protections for medical cannabis patients and providers have been extended another three months. The continuation comes courtesy of a continuing resolution that funds the federal government through December, keeping in place the Rohrabacher-Farr Amendment that is part of the Department of Justice (DOJ) funding for the year. The resolution cleared the Senate 80-17 on Thursday, with the House voting 316-90 in favor on Friday.

Since 2014, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and a series of Democratic cosponsors have succeeded in including language in the annual spending bill that bars the DOJ from spending funds interfering with state medical cannabis laws. The courts have ruled that means federal prosecutors must show violations of state law



Rep. Rohrabacher at ASA Lobby Day

Senate version of the FY18 appropriations bill but was blocked in the House last week by Republican leaders. Despite an impassioned 35-minute floor speech in the House from Rep. Rohrabacher and an OpEd he penned in the Washington Post, the House Rules Committee prevented a vote on the Rohrabacher-Blumenauer Amendment, as well as a number of others related to cannabis. One member of the committee told reporters that GOP leaders

to pursue federal marijuana charges against patients or providers.

The latest version has been included in the

were concerned votes on the cannabis amendments would split their caucus.

In 2014, the bipartisan amendment, then known as Rohrabacher-Farr for retired cosponsor Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA), passed the House 219-189. It was attached to DOJ funding again in 2015 on a vote of 242-186. Since then, the amendment has been extended through omnibus spending legislation like the continuing resolution just passed.

If and when the House passes an appropriations bill for FY 2018, a conference committee would decide how to reconcile differences with the Senate version, including whether to include the Rohrabacher-Farr Amendment.

Reps. Rohrabacher and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) issued a joint statement blasting the decision, saying it "is putting at risk the millions of patients who rely on medical marijuana." The amendment names DC and the 46 states that have some form of medical cannabis law.

Other blocked amendments include three to allow licensed cannabis businesses to use

Congress Challenges DOJ on Research Delay



Concerned members of Congress are asking Attorney General Jeff Sessions to explain a reported move by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to halt cannabis research. The bipartisan group's letter came after the Washington Post reported the DOJ was sitting on 22 applications to cultivate cannabis for research purposes.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) opened up applications a year ago. The DEA had resisted pressure to allow other sources for research cannabis than the one authorized farm run by the National Institute on Drug

Abuse, which is notorious for producing poor quality cannabis and denying researchers access to it. Now it's the DOJ that's blocking progress and effectively shutting down research, according to anonymous DEA officials who have spoken with reporters.

The bipartisan letter signed by Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Matt Gaetz (R-FL), Jared Polis (D-CO), and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) was made public by Tom Angell of MassRoots. Blumenauer, Polis and Rohrabacher are co-founders of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus.

ASA Educates State Officials at Conference



State policymakers got some education on medical cannabis policy and science last month. In early August, staff from ASA attended the 2017 National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) Legislative Summit in Boston, meeting with many of the 6,700 attendees.

As one of the largest annual gatherings of state legislators, legislative staff and government officials, the NCSL conference provided a prime opportunity to provide information on safe access to medical cannabis.

ASA distributed materials on how cannabis can ease the opioid crisis and provided briefing books to hundreds of state legislators. Americans for Safe Access staff were joined at the Conference by representatives from Safe



Access Tennessee, led by David Hairston (pictured).

"We had great conversations with legislators in states like Colorado, but more importantly we were able to change the

minds of legislators in states such as South Dakota, Idaho and Kansas," said ASA Legislative Analyst David Mangone.

Three separate panels focused exclusively on cannabis, and each was standing room only. ASA worked closely with the Health and Human Services Committee of NCSL on a resolution on cannabis mitigating the opioid crisis, to be voted on later this year. A resolution calling for rescheduling cannabis was approved.

Maryland OKs 3 PFC-Certified Companies

Three companies who are currently part of ASA's Patient Focused Certification program were approved for licensing by Maryland's Medical Cannabis Commission in August. Freestate Wellness, Harvest of Maryland, and Green Leaf Medical each received Stage 2 licenses to grow and process medical cannabis in Maryland, where program implementation delays have left patients suffering.

Before their state inspections, Freestate Wellness and Harvest of Maryland received a PFC inspection preparedness assessment to ensure their readiness. Pre-inspection services are a new offering this year from PFC to help medical cannabis businesses navigate the licensing process.

This PFC service includes a mock inspection with a PFC auditor, review of the state inspection check list and a spot check of procedures for compliance. After the audit, companies receive a report on suggested corrective actions and an audit debrief.

ASA Activist Profile: Valencia Elliott, Westchester, New York

Valencia Elliott grew up in what she calls a tough part of the country where she'd regularly smell cannabis being smoked, but she never had any interest in it. That changed late in life when her husband, an Army veteran who'd been exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, confided he had cancer. Worse, he'd been hiding a prostate cancer diagnosis for a year, and by the time he told her, he also had two other types of cancer. That was June 3, 2015, but the nightmare had already started. She didn't know what was wrong, but they were already going back and forth to the hospital with complaints about his pain.

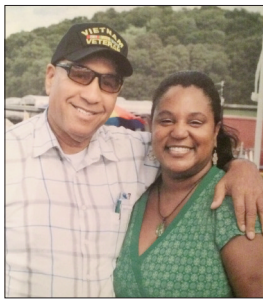


Her husband's care through the Veterans Health Administration required lots of management, dealing with increasing pain and the effects of a misdiagnosis and surgery that didn't heal. Soon, Valencia quit her job of 18 years in the health food industry so she could advocate for him. His situation spiraled quickly through rounds of radiation and chemotherapy that changed nothing.

"He did everything he was told but got no relief, no comfort," says Valencia. "I don't understand medical industry."

So she got on the internet and started looking for alternatives. New York had just passed its restrictive medical cannabis law, but it was not yet fully operational. Valencia reached out to a doctor in Minnesota, and he put her in touch with ASA, who helped her with more informa-

tion. Since New York requires physicians who write recommendations in the state to have a special registration, and the program had just launched, there were very few doctors.



"It really was a process," Valencia says. "I was just getting angrier." On March 11, 2016, New York state issued her husband a card. Now the problem was finding quality medicine. She tried the most expensive strains and CBD oil. Nothing she could get seemed to be strong enough to control her husband's pain. Nor was it easy to get it to him. By now, he was in a care facility that was not supportive of using medical cannabis, so Valencia had to disguise the medicine she took him.

"I just wanted a better quality of life for my husband," Valencia says. "It was a very traumatic way of dying."

On May 1, 2016, he passed away. "If he'd had better access sooner, he wouldn't have suffered as much," says Valencia. "New York is very hard, very frustrating."

Determined to learn more and make a difference for others, Valencia applied to ASA for a scholarship to attend the Unity Conference in Washington, D.C. There she met advocates from all over and came away equipped with

new contacts and information. From there, she went to Albany to lobby state lawmakers.

"I'm going back to work, looking for a job that will let me help open people's eyes," says Valencia. "We have more to learn, but this medicine can help people's suffering,"

PFC Offers Free Services for Labs, New Webinars



September is a busy month for ASA's Patient Focused Certification program. On the 18th and 19th, Jahan Marcu, PhD, will be conducting a training in Philadelphia that meets the state's requirements for training on operations. He'll also be presenting the first training on extraction safety.

Dr. Marcu will also be representing PFC at the NCIA Cannabis Business Conference talking about the importance of safe and reliable standardized products. Among those who will be there are Lori Ajax, head of the California Bureau of Medical Cannabis Regulation and BDS Analytics, a long-time NCIA partner, which has released a trends report on California that you can read about in NCIA's latest blog post. ASA members can use code PFC15 to save 15% on registration at the California Cannabis Business Conference September 21-22 in Anaheim.

Earlier this month, PFC conducted a webinar with leading cannabis researcher, Ethan Russo, MD, talking about how cannabis can help ease the opioid crisis. Excerpts from that talk will be available on ASA's youtube channel soon, with full access for ASA members.

Dr. Marcu was also in Oregon last month at the Cannabis Science Conference delivering an invited talk on the endocannabinoid system. PFC has been offering a special promotion in Oregon for reduced cost or free laboratory certifications. PFC will be back in Oregon in October for more trainings and assessments. Find out details at safeaccessnow.org/events.

PFC, continued from page 1

Several of the companies that were approved last month also have PFC-trained employees. The PFC training program offers a range of certifications in different disciplines (cultivation, laboratory, distribution, manufacturing) intended for everyone from entry level staff to managers and regulators.

So far over 12,000 patients have signed up to become eligible for the Maryland medical cannabis program, and 400 medical providers have signed up to make recommendations. As of September 1st, Maryland has 12 growers, 6 processors, 1 dispensary, and 2 independent testing labs.

ACTION ALERT: Sign the Petition to End the Opioid Crisis

Opioids claim the lives of 91 individuals every day. With nearly 60,000 overdose deaths in 2016, 60% of which were related to prescription opioids, it is clear that there is a major public health crisis in our country. That is why we are launching our End Pain Not Lives campaign. In order to ensure that all possible tools are being utilized as part of the path forward to ending the crisis, we need President Trump to formally declare the opioid epidemic a national health emergency. Declaration of a national emergency frees up resources that public health officials and states can then use to help treat pain safely and ultimately end the epidemic. Urge President Trump to make this official now by signing this petition! <https://safeaccess.us/TrumpEPNL>

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