

Senate passes bipartisan medical pot reform bill

Written by gallupsun

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SANTA FE – With solid bipartisan support, the Senate today passed by a vote of 29 – 11 legislation that strongly reforms New Mexico’s medical cannabis laws for the first time in ten years. The bill was sponsored by Senator Cisco McSorley (D-16-Bernalillo), who also was the sponsor of the original medical cannabis law in New Mexico. Last-minute changes to SB 177 were made on the Senate floor including requiring that veterans be diagnosed with a qualifying medical condition to enroll in the program, like any other patient or applicant, and mandating that patient renewals occur annually, albeit in a streamlined fashion thereafter.

“I am proud of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle in the Senate for passing this bill to lighten the regulatory burden on patients, many of whom are facing life-or-death situations daily. It is compassionate, patient-focused legislation. It contains strong checks and balances. We listened carefully to patients across our state, and to our constituents. This legislation will lead to more people getting access to medical cannabis treatment in New Mexico, which has proven to be extremely successful,” said Sen. McSorley.

Changes to the state’s medical cannabis rules under the McSorley bill include:

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- Allows patients to have 5 ounces of medical cannabis.
 - Cannabis producers are permitted to grow as many as 450 plants, and that will not change until the number of patients increases.
 - Puts into statute all existing, qualifying medical conditions for the program currently listed in state Health Department regulations.
 - Adds the term “substance abuse disorder” for those undergoing treatment for addiction.
- Cannabis has been proven effective in treating opioid, methamphetamine and alcohol addiction.

Changes to New Mexico’s medical cannabis laws contained in SB 177 are the result of listening to hundreds of patients over the past months, the latest medical research, and surveys of current best practices in other states and internationally. The bill addresses many of the key issues patients raised.

There are approximately 30,000 patients using medical cannabis in the state. Based on other states’ statutes and experiences, New Mexico probably should have approximately 60,000 patients. SB 177’s reforms will allow that to occur. The state’s groundbreaking 2007 medical cannabis law was one of the first such laws passed in the United States. SB 177 is endorsed by the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce.

SB 177 will be taken up next by the House of Representatives.