

Monday March 18, 2024

Cory Reeves- Great Falls Mayor

Great Falls Commission Members

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over several years, previous Great Falls City Commissions have permitted marijuana retail sales operations into industrial zones within the city limits. The commissions supported such action based upon a false belief that Initiative-190 (I-190), passed by a majority of voters November 3, 2020, legalized all recreational marijuana. However, in ten sections (about 20%), that document proposed various controls of marijuana to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the people. I-190 did not stipulate any proven brain damaging tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) potency levels, even potencies that would be needed to reinforce the proposed controls. Many of those controls are based upon existing state laws which analyze and authorize local government restrictions of THC.

To have made that decision, they obviously had not analyzed I-190 based upon the specific language it contained. They have been influenced by the cannabis industry and marijuana users who have suffered, what thousands of scientific studies have verified, as THC related reductions of brain material in the hippocampus section of the prefrontal cortex of the human brain.

The state legislature decided to make all marijuana above 35% illegal (16-12-224) in violation of these unproven user emotional beliefs. The marijuana industry seems to have accepted the legislature's decision and their legal position has been altered to proclaim only cannabis at or below 35% as legal. That is in violation of I-190's emotional concepts. There were obviously a few user objections that may have been dependency and addiction based, but the marijuana industry realized the concept that I-190 was not scientifically proven to always be in the best interest of the citizens as required by the Montana Constitution in eight places. Literally, professional analysis and proven scientific facts have proven that the marijuana industry was not always correctly legal per Montana laws, the Montana constitution, the Great Falls City code, or the will of a majority of voters, or scientific evidence.

Because of the tremendous growth of marijuana use in the last several decades, the scientifically proven harms of cannabis use have become much more evident in exacting scientifically established facts and professional observation. That is not congruent with the scientifically proven brain-altered mental functions expressed by many local adolescents and most adult users, that "Hey man, marijane don't hurt nuttin." Even Initiative-190 in two places [Section 1(2)(L) and Section 27(10)] admits significant marijuana harms that are recognized scientifically and professionally.

In two sections, Initiative 190 discloses as the will of a majority of the voters that the use of cannabis has always, and currently is, causing economic and social harms:

I-190 Section 1(2)(L)- The marijuana industry may be taxed to "...provide compensation for the economic and social costs of past and current marijuana cultivation, processing, and use..."

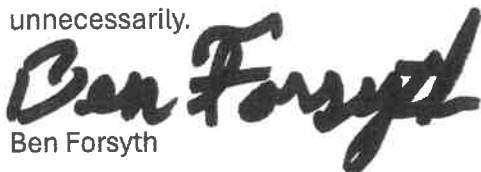
I-190 Section 27(10)- Tax levied under this section must "... provide for the economic and social costs of past and current marijuana cultivation, processing, and use...."

Most brain-reduced marijuana users and sympathizers do not understand the initiative's admitting of these dangers.

The taxes levied by I-190 sections 16-12-101(2)(j) and 27(10), that admit the harmful use of marijuana, do not begin to cover the accumulated marijuana-related costs to education, medicine, the economy, law enforcement, the judicial systems, and society. A previous Cascade County Health Department executive, Trisha Gardener, publicly admitted this problem before the Cascade County Commissioners in 2022. Across the United States, professional-statistical analysis of marijuana-related government costs indicate increased cannabis related expenses for all government units involved in therapy, government functions, and their functional economics. Taxpayers are often burdened with these scientifically-proven, cannabis-caused increased expenses. Scientific and professional statistical analysis have found those expenses would be gradually reduced if marijuana potency and availability would be considerably lowered by laws as directly and indirectly proposed and implied by the will of the majority of voters in Initiative-190, the Montana Constitution (Article II, Section 3&4), and the City of Great Falls Code 17.4.050, and state law 76-2-304.

Four scientifically based state laws [50-32-101, 50-32-201(1-8), 50-32-202, and 50-32-222(4)(t)] have labeled marijuana a dangerous drug because of the proven harms cannabis distributors in Great Falls (and other communities) have illegally sold in fortified cannabis products. Nine sections of Initiative-190 propose controls of marijuana to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens through various controls of dangerous marijuana products. Those proposals are stringent beyond many state laws that propose punishment of cannabis possession and distribution. Some of the mentioned I-190 laws suggest prison terms for cannabis possessors and distributors of 5, 20, 25, 50, and life sentences for some kinds of cannabis violations. Proposed fines range from \$5,000.00 to \$50,000.00, or both imprisonment and fines. These punishments are recognized as the will of the majority of voters per Initiative-190.

Previous Great Falls City Commissions have allowed scientifically established dangerous potencies and availability of marijuana products into some areas of Great Falls by breaking a state law (76-2-304) and by not using other laws [16-12-101(2)(j) and 16-12-301(2)(a)] that could lead to the reduction of cannabis harms to all users, along with the enforcement of seven other proposed laws found in Initiative-190. Obviously, previous Great Falls City Commissions have broken the law and not used their legislated authority to reduce the factually proven harms of marijuana. Those situations are negatively affecting, and harming hundreds, if not thousands of our local citizens unnecessarily.



Ben Forsyth

Phone: 406-727-4007

3301 9th St. N.E.

Email: brforsyth@msn.com

Great Falls, MT 59404