

## Update on Medical Marijuana in Iowa:

For centuries, marijuana has been appreciated for its powerful medicinal qualities. Today, in the U.S. and elsewhere marijuana is used by victims of terminal cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis and a host of other medical conditions to relieve debilitating and often life-threatening symptoms such as severe nausea, pain spasms and loss of appetite. Patients have criticized commercially produced drug alternatives as being unaffordable, plagued with unacceptable side effects, and often as not providing the same quality of relief as marijuana.

Thirteen states have approved the use of marijuana for medical purposes under the supervision of a physician. In Arizona and Washington D.C., similar laws have been blocked by legal complications. Over 20% of the U.S. Population now lives in a state where medical use of marijuana is legally accepted.

Iowa, still lists marijuana on its highest level of controlled substances, despite the fact that no drug “overdose” deaths from marijuana have ever been reported. Cocaine, opiates, meth and many other dangerous drugs are placed below marijuana on schedule II of Iowa’s Controlled substances act.

Thus, Iowa still attempts to imprison terminally ill and chronically disabled patients who are driven out of desperation into using marijuana. This is neither good medical care, nor good drug policy.



The Iowa Supreme Court has held that until the Iowa Board of Pharmacy authorizes medical use of marijuana, even terminally ill patients can be prosecuted. *State v. Bonjour*, 694 N.W.2d 511 (2005). Bonjour needed marijuana in order to tolerate his highly critical regimen of AIDS medications.

In 2008, the ACLU of Iowa approached the Iowa Board of Pharmacy with a formal request to move marijuana out of Schedule I, which is restricted to substances that have “no recognized use for treatment in the United States.” We pointed out that marijuana is now accepted for medical treatment in many states.

The Pharmacy Board balked, and we took them to court. The Board was ordered to follow the statutory language in considering the removal of marijuana from Schedule I.

(Continues on reverse)

**Again the Board has refused, and the ACLU of Iowa plans to take the whole issue back to court again. In the meantime, a bill that was introduced in the Iowa Legislature in 2008 has been neglected by the Iowa General Assembly. It is not likely to be debated unless your state legislators hear from you.**

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- 1. Contact your state legislators and let them know that they need to end the prosecution of terminally ill and chronically disabled medical marijuana users in Iowa. To find your legislators, go to: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/>.**
- 2. Support the efforts of the ACLU, NORML and other organizations that are trying to bring some level of sanity and compassion to our nation's drug policies and enforcement practices.**

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**American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa**

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goto: <http://aclu-ia.org>**

The ACLU of Iowa is a non-profit membership supported organization. We are an affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union. Our mission is to protect individual constitutional rights such as equality, freedom of speech, religion, and privacy. We have been protecting the civil rights of Iowans since 1935.

