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**Upfront: Marijuana Already Legal in Iowa?**

When the Iowa Board of Pharmacy ruled in March that there was a medical use for marijuana and the state legislature should allow doctors to prescribe it, the board may have opened the door to legalization before any laws were even signed.

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy recently pointed to statutes dating back to the 1970s that apparently allow the IBP to reschedule drugs and implement regulations without legislative approval. IBP officials said they were aware of the statute, but first wanted consensus from elected officials. Democratic leaders are moving forward with a committee to study the issue over the summer. A bill could be introduced as early as January.

Patient advocates nationwide say allowing politics and public opinion to dominate debate over medicine and science is unethical and hurts those already suffering.

Des Moines resident Carl Olsen is, in many ways, the man responsible for the IBP's involvement in rescheduling marijuana. He's been fighting for marijuana law reform for decades.

Olsen said the IBP's March ruling is a victory, but he's not satisfied. In fact, Olsen just filed another lawsuit against the state, asking the IBP to give reasons for the more than 20 criteria for reclassification. Olsen believes the IBP is avoiding that because a full explanation of each criteria would show not only that the recommended Schedule II classification is wrong, but that marijuana should be removed from the Controlled Substances Act. Schedule II includes drugs such as morphine and cocaine.

"I'm not going to stop now that I've got some progress," he said. "I'm going for truth and justice and I won't stop until I get it ... I'm going to fight them until I can't fight them anymore."

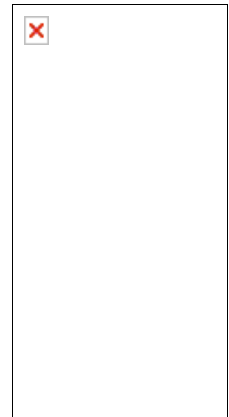
Olsen said in the meantime he will urge state lawmakers to use this opportunity to push for federal drug law reform. While Olsen and others have petitioned the DEA for years to reschedule marijuana, he said a petition from a state would carry far more clout and makes legal sense.

"No state [that has medical marijuana] has done that and it's pathetic," he said.

— *Bryan Cohen*

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