

Medical Marijuana Statement

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It is no secret that you cannot feel or understand the feelings of another person if you have not been in their shoes. This came full blown to me in regard to my battle with cancer. At 39 years of age I was diagnosed with stage four lymphocytic lymphoma. The doctor found cancer in my liver, lymph nodes, bone marrow and spleen. My lungs were filling with lymphocytic fluid which had to be drained. Within a few days after entering the hospital my spleen was removed and almost immediately after the operation I commenced a three drug chemotherapy regimen, six days every three weeks. My initial stay in the hospital lasted a little over 30 days and continual bone marrows were taken. Talk about painful, it is difficult to describe, but one day the intern who was assisting my doctor said cancer patients should not have to suffer and with or without the doctor's permission she would inject me with valium and that ended the painful experience of bone marrow extraction. After my first chemo I was a basket case with a terrible feeling of nausea, nausea that can only come from chemo therapy. After a little over a month I was sent home with a diagnosis of 2 to 4 weeks to live. To make a long story short I remained on chemo therapy for 7 years and was nauseous after each treatment. The doctor prescribed drugs that were meant to help but they didn't.

Since getting a remission I have had several bladder cancers and a malignant polyp in my intestine.

During my first hospital stay the man across the room from me constantly groaned in pain and I asked my doctor if I was going to experience that kind of pain and he said that I would not. He advised me that the man had extensive bone cancer and there was little that could be done to control the pain. After a few days the groans stopped and I could only presume he died. It seemed incomprehensible to me that there should be such suffering and any drug, including marijuana, should be available to assist the patient.

Over the years I visited with thousand of people fighting the battle against cancer. During my tenure as attorney general, almost every month, I visited patients in the hospitals in Topeka and Wichita and have continued to talk and correspond to people fighting the cancer battle.

I corresponded with a lady in Wichita who was suffering from the ravages of cancer. One day I got a card that said in part, "Thank you for always being there to care." A funeral notice was enclosed with a note that said, "Regina purchased this card a few days before she died – she was so elated to receive your letter of encouragement and she wanted you to know how much she appreciated your taking the time to write to her – an unknown.

I regret that anyone would think they are an unknown because we all have a place in this world of ours. People who are ill with cancer and undergoing treatment should not suffer alone nor should they be denied access to any medicinal remedy that a doctor believes will assist in relieving a patient who is ill or suffering.

I first advocated the right of a doctor to recommend Marijuana to alleviate the nauseating effects and pain associated with chemotherapy in 1983. In that year I convinced the National Association of Attorneys General to pass a resolution recommending the use of medical marijuana. Obviously, I am still at it.

There are many drugs that are available by prescription that contain derivatives of drugs that otherwise are deemed illegal, for example; morphine, methamphetamine and cocaine. But when it comes to marijuana it is treated like some voodoo medicine that should not be recommended by physicians. I find this to be absurd.

Marijuana has been used successfully to treat the debilitating symptoms of the following:

- cancer and cancer chemotherapy
- AIDS
- multiple sclerosis
- epilepsy
- glaucoma
- anxiety
- and other serious illnesses such as arthritis, migraines, menstrual cramps, alcohol and opiate addiction, depression and other mood disorders.

Let me make clear that I am in no way advocating drug legalization. But I also do not believe that the state should preempt the role of the physician when it comes to deciding what's best for ill Kansans. That's why I support changing state law to ensure that individuals can obtain and use a limited amount of marijuana if recommended by their doctor - without fear of prosecution.

I am convinced that we have a moral and ethical responsibility to protect law-abiding citizens from the risk and trauma of arrest, prosecution and conviction and prison simply because they're attempting to gain relief from a serious physical condition.

I'm calling on all Kansans to join me in voicing their support for legalizing this medicine by signing on to the Kansas Compassionate Care Coalition's Statement of Principle through their website at www.ksgccc.org.

Together we can prevail upon our elected representatives to enact compassionate safeguards that will protect our fellow citizens, family, and friends in their hour of need.