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The focus of my campaign remains getting Iowans back to work and balancing the state budget by reducing government spending. In the spirit of reducing government spending and protecting our liberties, I have decided to pursue my inclination to de-criminalize marijuana use and distribution in the state of Iowa if elected to the Senate. Let me be clear that changing Iowa's law will not change the federal classification of marijuana. Further let me also state that I will not pursue a policy of "medical marijuana" that will pit the state law against the federal law and contribute to a California-like problem that comes with taxation and commercialization.

Many proponents of legalized and commercialized marijuana use the comparison to alcohol to make their arguments. I find most of these arguments valid. We have an historical reference in the prohibition of the 1920s. While a thin majority of voting Americans wish to eradicate alcohol consumption as blight to society, the general public did not heed the law. We face a similar situation in which a majority of voters recognize that our country will suffer from an increased use of marijuana in the population. However it is my belief that everyone who wants to use marijuana is able to do so, and that it has reached maximum saturation in society and in pop culture. The law now has no purpose for which it was intended, which is to discourage and punish use and distribution. Logically then we are reaping only the negative aspects of the law. Those include increased cost of incarceration, violence, and the draining of dollars from our state and nation to countries such as Mexico and organizations such as Al-Qaeda.

Let me be clear: I do not use marijuana. Further I believe that its use is harmful to our society. It is my belief that its use has become so prevalent that government can no longer reverse this trend without severely harming and eroding our civil liberties. Once again our nation must

experience a great awakening in order to reduce its use. That is the proper role of preachers, prophets, and churches, and I do not support altering our form of government and its protection of free will, self-determination, and liberty to try to accomplish something that I believe requires the miracle of spiritual rebirth.

With that belief in mind, I will pursue the following if elected to state government.

1. De-criminalize the use, growth, possession, and delivery of marijuana for sale to individuals.

2. Prohibit the commercialization of marijuana (current dealer system-buyer beware, much like the state's policy toward whole unpasteurized milk).

3. Prohibit all state and local taxes on marijuana. (If it is a revenue stream, it will be encouraged; we also have a moral responsibility as a state not to profit from someone's addiction.)

4. Repeal marijuana's classification as a drug requiring a drug stamp and oversight from the pharmaceutical board. (This prevents the board from being corrupted from its original purpose: the oversight of medical pharmaceuticals.)

5. Release all inmates that have been convicted of a nonviolent dealing of marijuana from incarceration.

6. Protect the rights of employers to have a drug-free workplace and to hire drug-free employees.

I do not support the position of those advocating for "medical marijuana," which I believe is an oxymoron. In my opinion, the Iowa pharmaceutical board has no more business regulating marijuana as a medicine than it does dispensing alcohol as an antidepressant. I do not support any attempts to "medicalize" pot or to make it a revenue stream for the state. I will oppose all legislation if elected that works toward legitimizing marijuana to these ends.

Mark Riley
Republican Candidate for Iowa State Senate District 43
Davenport