

Full Statement by Nancy Pelosi

Congressional Representative Nancy Pelosi, said in her official "Statement in Support of Hinchey Amendment to Allow the Use of Marijuana for Medicinal Purposes" to the U.S. House of Representatives on July 18, 2001:

"Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Hinchey amendment to prevent Federal interference with State laws that allow the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, medicinal purposes only. Mr. Chairman, I know this is a very difficult issue for Members to understand, and that is why I commended the gentleman from New York, Mr. HINCHEY, for his courage. Over the past two decades in my city of San Francisco, we have lost nearly 19,000 people to AIDS, about 10,000 people a decade. I have seen the suffering that accompanies the advanced stages of this disease far too many times. I could name the names of people that I have ministered the needs of in their dying days.

Proven medicinal uses of marijuana include alleviation of some of the most debilitating symptoms of AIDS, including pain, wasting, and nausea. These benefits also improve the quality of life for patients with cancer, with MS, and other severe medical conditions.

Mr. Chairman, opponents of medical marijuana argue there are other ways to ingest the active ingredient of marijuana, including the use of synthetic THC. However, we know that the drug containing THC does not work for all people. There is no logic in the assertion that a very ill person should be sent to jail for using the smokeable form of a drug whose active ingredient is currently licensed for oral use.

Mr. Chairman, 56 percent of the voters in my home state of California passed an initiative authorizing seriously ill patients to take marijuana upon the recommendation of a licensed physician. Proposition 215 has provided thousands of Californians suffering from debilitating diseases safe and legal access to a drug that makes life a little more bearable.

As the California Medical Association stated when expressing its support for medical marijuana, and I quote, ``Statement of the California Medical Association: Patients should not suffer unnecessarily when other options fail."

The amendment of the gentleman from New York, Mr. HINCHEY, would prevent the Justice Department from using any funds to interfere with the rights of California and the eight other states that allow for the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, for medicinal purposes only, to alleviate the suffering of their citizens.

Mr. Chairman, to effectively fight the war on drug abuse, we must get our priorities in order and fund treatment and education. Making criminals of seriously ill people who seek proven therapy is not a step toward controlling America's drug problem. I urge my colleagues to support the Hinchey amendment."