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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 7, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.

House of Representatives

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PALAZZO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 5, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVEN M. PALAZZO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, since I was a high school student, I've

watched the escalation of the war on drugs, especially marijuana. I slowly became aware of its widespread use. As a freshman legislator in Oregon 40 years ago, my opinion was set by a hog farmer from eastern Oregon who was a State representative named Stafford Hansell.

Stafford held the Oregon House, and the people crowded into the gallery spellbound with his tutorial on marijuana and its comparison to other addictive substances, both legal and illegal. This older gentleman, who didn't smoke, didn't drink alcohol—let alone use marijuana—made his case. He pointed out how tobacco was highly addictive and killed hundreds of thousands of Americans per year. He discussed alcohol, whose damaging properties had once led the country into a foolish, costly and ultimately self-defeating experiment with prohibition. Alcohol use was damaging for some, led to dependency for many, while contributing to tens of thousands of highway deaths every year, and serious health problems for countless others.

By the time Representative Hansell got to marijuana, he'd convinced me that the bill he was advocating—two plant legalization—was not just worthy of my support, which I was already inclined to do, but something that I should advocate that Oregonians should be allowed this choice, less damaging and addicting than tobacco.

We didn't legalize marijuana in 1973, although I was assured that if the 22 of us who had voted for the bill had been supported by the people who used it but voted no, the measure would have

passed easily. We did make Oregon the first State to decriminalize the use of marijuana. Possession of a small amount was made a minor infraction, treated like a traffic ticket. Today, 40 years later, the case is even more compelling. Fourteen States have now decriminalized policies like Oregon passed in 1973.

In 1996, California pioneered the legal use of medical marijuana whose therapeutic qualities have long been known and employed. And since then, 18 States and the District of Columbia have approved medical marijuana initiatives, allowing its use to relieve chronic pain, nausea, and other conditions. Notably, two-thirds of these approvals were a result of voter initiatives.

Last fall, voters in Colorado and Washington approved adult recreational use with 55 percent approval margins. Studies show that a majority of Americans now agree that marijuana should be legalized. It is time that the Federal Government revisit its policies. Drugs with less serious classifications, like methamphetamine and cocaine, have more serious health and behavioral impacts; yet marijuana retains its Schedule I classification.

In 2011, two-thirds of a million people were arrested for using a substance that millions use, many more have tried, and a majority of Americans feel should be legal. Because there are stark racial differences in enforcement and incarceration, there are wide disparities in the legal treatment for communities of color versus their white counterparts. Medical marijuana is

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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