

Chelsea Reform Democratic Club

Draft Position Paper

(As amended and passed by the Executive Committee on June 3, 2004 by a vote of 14-0-0)

By Kathy Kinsella

Re: Medical Marijuana

The Chelsea Reform Democratic Club believes that individuals deserve to have the most appropriate medical procedures in accordance with their doctors' recommendations and without government interference. The law should not inhibit a person's access to life and health-sustaining treatment under a practitioner's supervision.

Many controlled substances that are legal for medical use are otherwise illegal. CRDC believes that marijuana has legitimate medical uses and that the medically approved use of marijuana should be legal in New York State-

Medical marijuana has been shown to help patients with cancer, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and other serious illnesses. In 1980, the New York State Dept. of Health's Antonio G. Olivieri Controlled Substances Therapeutic Research Program concluded that "the use of marijuana may alleviate the nausea and ill-effects of cancer chemotherapy, may alleviate the ill-effects of glaucoma and may have other therapeutic uses," by lessening nausea, appetite loss, pain and anxiety. In 1997 a *New England Journal of Medicine* editorial stated that prohibiting "physicians from alleviating suffering by prescribing marijuana for seriously ill patients is misguided, heavy-handed, and inhumane".

THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, has been approved in pill form since 1986 for medical use by the Federal Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Agency, but is limited by dosage control and can be less effective than when it is used in its natural form.

CRDC is gravely concerned that the approximately 32,000 New York City residents each year who are diagnosed with cancer, and as of March 31, 2002, the approximately 75,000 New York City residents who are diagnosed and known to be living with HIV or AIDS (City and State D.O.H.), are denied the right to use a substance that could help their condition or relieve their suffering.

Nine states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington,) allow patients to use marijuana for medical use. New York should join these states as a leader in the humane and compassionate treatment of its residents.

The Chelsea Reform Democratic Club supports the legalization of medically supervised marijuana use. We call upon the New York State Democratic Party to do the same.

In March 1997, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried introduced a comprehensive medical marijuana bill, now known as Assembly Bill A.5796-A, that would legalize the possession, manufacture, sale, administration, delivery, dispensing and distribution of marijuana in connection with medical use for certified patients suffering from serious illnesses and who qualify in accordance with their physician. We urge our party to support this humane legislation.

It is the moral responsibility, and should be the legal responsibility, of our State to guarantee access to life-sustaining and relief-granting medical treatment, including medical marijuana, to patients who qualify, in accordance with their health care program. This is no less than a compassionate and caring state can do for its residents.