

**From:** [cooktwo@comcast.net](mailto:cooktwo@comcast.net) <[cooktwo@comcast.net](mailto:cooktwo@comcast.net)>

**Sent:** Friday, March 4, 2016 10:51 AM

**To:** Martin LaLonde

**Subject:** Marijuana Legalization Legislation

Hi Martin,

Michael Albertson, 11 Harbor Ridge Road, SB here. We spoke outside the Orchard school on Election Day. You asked me to get back to you concerning the legalization of marijuana issue.

As I mentioned in our conversation, I support legalization and hope you will as well. For me, this is an economic development/tax issue more than a “freedom of choice” issue. There are numerous, important and expensive priorities facing Vermont: funding/controlling health care and insurance costs, cleaning up the lake and other water quality/management issues, the expansion of social services for our most vulnerable citizens, controlling property taxes, funding education, forest management... as you know, the list goes on.

Without significant, new sources of revenue it will be impossible to address many of the issues you yourself have identified (and I agree with) as important state priorities. My fear is without additional revenue we will not be able maintain, let alone improve, the quality of

life in Vermont. For those reasons I strongly support legalization and heavy taxation of marijuana.

I do share some of the same concerns law enforcement has raised on this issue, particularly road safety. But from what I understand this has not been a problem in Colorado or Washington. Road safety is important, but it is an issue to be managed, not used to eliminate the 40 to 80 million dollars in tax revenue the Rand Report estimated legalization would generate.

Of course there are concerns around teens getting access, rightfully so. We have laws against underage drinking. We have laws against buying alcohol for minors. And there needs to be similar laws around marijuana. But let's be real, just about any teen in the state already knows someone they can get it from. As the parent of a child who just graduated SB High (No pun intended. Okay, maybe a little pun.) I know this for a fact... from parental experience. Again, this is an issue that needs to be managed, but not used to kill the bill.

I would like those who are inclined to vote against legalization to ask themselves: If I vote against legalization where in the budget am I willing to cut 40 to 80 million dollars? What programs will go unfunded? Opiate addiction services, protective services for children (I am a former abuse and neglect investigator for the now defunct Massachusetts Office for Children so this issue is very close to my heart), health care, lake clean up, infrastructure expansion and upkeep?

On a final note, my current understanding of the legislation is that it limits the amount an out of state person can purchase versus a Vermont citizen. Why? Isn't the point to RAISE revenue? I respectfully suggest an amendment to the bill that will allow out of state customers to purchase the same amount as Vermont residents but pay a significantly HIGHER tax! The whole point of this process is to raise revenue, right?

This is a golden opportunity to put Vermont on firm financial footing for the future. As you yourself wrote in your Town Meeting Report: "... young Vermonters and potential Vermonters want to put down roots

here, but say that we need better careers, career advancement, public transportation, and broadband. We have the quality of life they want for themselves and their families, yet we need to continue to match their passion for our state with the economic opportunities they need to thrive.” The legalization and taxation of marijuana by the State of Vermont is a big, revenue-generating step in exactly that direction. Plus, this legislation will be a job creator for our state.

People to grow and tend crops will be hired (could be a real boom for economically stressed farmers), retail outlets will be opened and staffed, money will be invested in these businesses... all benefiting our state economy and increasing tax revenue. These additional economic benefits aren't even part of the 40 – 80 million tax windfall estimated in the Rand Report.

Once again, I urge you to vote in favor of legalization and taxation of marijuana. Thank you for your time.

Best wishes,

Michael Albertson