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**Sent:** Thursday, March 24, 2016 9:00 AM

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**Subject:** Don't be a Nay

Good Day VT House Representatives Judiciary Committee Members:

I am a voting member of Rutland City and wish to convey my support and urge you to support the H.277/S.241 that is coming from your chamber and the VT Senate. I know many groups are offering fear tactics to sway votes for a Nay, but I wish to remind you that a recent VPR poll published on February 25th 2016 shows a majority of VTers in support of the legalization of marijuana. I also am a supporter of this common sense bill. We here in VT have typically taken common sense approaches to tough social issues. Look at Vermont's record on human rights, civil rights, and human dignity laws often being the first to take a leap of faith. I know and understand it is easy to be swayed by fear, it is human nature to focus on fear versus level headed-ness. The bill coming from the Senate goes further and is more comprehensive than those in other states. One of my favorite scare tactics is the approach that VT should wait to see how these "social experiments" turn out in other states. That is amusing to me since marijuana has been in use by many people across America and the globe for most of recorded human history. Just as with tobacco or alcohol the sky has not fallen and societies have not crumbled under their legal introduction and use in society. The fear argument that marijuana leads to greater use in other substances or that suddenly people en mass flock to use marijuana is also comical given that it is more likely that people have been using marijuana all along and now have regulated markets to turn to thus giving us for the first time the ability to look at actual use numbers instead of law enforcement numbers of those who are caught usually by some happenstance. States Attorney David Cahill's testimony in yesterdays Rutland Herald that blackmarket dealers may substitute with harder drugs is only speculation, as it could also be speculated that those same dealers may turn to the legal market with legal tax paying jobs as has been seen in Colorado especially if license fees are reasonable. It may also be speculated that people with criminal histories of marijuana would be able to elevate their perspective employment/financial opportunities without prohibition era infractions looming on background checks. I have lived in Portugal where all drugs are decriminalized and their response is that of public health programming, they have some of lowest overdose, related crime, and addicts of the entire EU. I did my undergraduate degree in Boulder Colorado. There was no wave of people smoking marijuana. I recently went to Seattle Washington and I did not find marijuana being discarded in the street or people walking about under the influence with joints in hand. With such a commonly used substance and given that regardless of Montpelier's ultimate decision that it will continue to be used by some 80,000 (admitting) VTers it seems like a no brainer to bring to light its use and to direct money towards education, prevention, and enforcement. I urge you to be strong and vote Yea on H.277/S.241 for a common sense VT response to failed prohibition.

Respectfully,  
Paul Black