

FFC NEWS

NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2015

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senator Jeff Brandes files SB 528; Florida for Care works for passage

BY BIANCA GARZA

FLORIDA SENATOR JEFF BRANDES (R-22), who represents Saint Petersburg and Tampa, filed SB 528, the Florida Medical Marijuana Act, on January 26, 2015. In its current form, the comprehensive bill allows for a well-regulated market in the state and serves sick and suffering patients properly, according to *Florida for Care*.

“Senator Brandes has taken a courageous step by listening to people of Florida,” said Ben Pollara, executive director of *Florida for Care*. “He has really stepped up to the plate.”

Three months after state constitutional Amendment 2 failed with 58 percent of the vote, Brandes said, “I just believe that physicians and patients should be able to make determinations about what’s best for their care, and I believe it should be done through the legislative process.”

“So do we,” agreed Pollara. “Too many of our loved ones, vets, neighbors, and fellow taxpayers are denied access to effective medicine that can allow relief from conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder, epilepsy, chronic pain, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease), and cancer. Doctors should have the right and the ability to recommend a treatment that allows a better

“I believe it should be done through the legislative process....”

JEFF BRANDES

quality of life for people suffering from debilitating conditions.”

Brandes served in the US Army Reserves from 1996 to 2007 and in the Iraq War from 2003 to 2004, during which he earned the Combat Action Badge. He began his political career in 2010 when he defeated incumbent State Representative Bill Heller (D-52). In 2012, Brandes ran in Senate District 22

and won with 56 percent of the vote.

“We believe the senator’s background and willingness to work with everyone makes him a great legislative leader for the movement,” said Dan Rogers, legislative affairs director of *Florida for Care*.

“Many groups have been working on this initiative for quite some time, and my goal is to work openly with all of the interested parties on this issue so that we can pass responsible legislation that gives relief to those Floridians in need,” Brandes said in a prepared statement.

Since the filing of SB 528, *Florida for Care’s* legislative team, led by Dan Rogers and Kari Hicks, has been working hand-in-hand with Brandes and his staff members to build momentum for this important bill. ■



Florida Senator Jeff Brandes (right) meets Cathy Jordan, Florida’s most famous pot patient, who suffers from Lou Gehrig’s disease. She says cannabis slows the disease, which leads to paralysis.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Spin turns into reality as legislators debate people's will on medical marijuana

BY BEN POLLARA

ALL I CAN SAY IS: WHAT A DIFFERENCE a few months makes! It was only less than four months ago when I watched the results come in on election night and stood in front of a blinding scrum of TV cameras, microphones, and reporters to put a positive spin on our loss at the polls with Amendment 2.

What I said that night, however, was true: 58 percent of Floridians' votes is a *mandate* for medical marijuana and a clear expression of the will of the people in this state.

In my disappointment and cynicism about the process, I didn't actually believe that Tallahassee politicians would view the results in the way that I (and all of you and the Editorial Board of the anti-Amendment 2 *Tampa Bay Times*) did. But guess what, folks? It's looking more and more like they might.

As most of you know, I'm a dyed-in-the-wool, capital "D" Democrat. But through the course of the campaign and our current legislative efforts, I've become a single-issue, non-partisan guy, and it's a Republican, Senator Jeff Brandes, who is leading the charge on this issue in a gigantic way.

The legislative team at *Florida for Care* and I are working hand-in-hand with Brandes' office, every single day, to bring a comprehensive medical marijuana law to Florida. I try to be a realist and a cynic in matters concerning Tallahassee, but I *really* think it is possible!

On the House side, we have a much tougher road, but we see major positive developments in that chamber as well. Representative Greg Steube, a Republican who's father is a sheriff, has filed a companion bill to Brandes' that is nowhere near acceptable but a



Pollara

JEFF BORG

strong start nonetheless.

Perhaps the most bizarre turn of events thus far is that I am having regular and productive conversations with Sheriff Bob Gualtieri of Pinellas County — yes, *that* Bob Gualtieri — the one who debated John Morgan statewide on NBC last fall. He, too, has respect for broad majority support and is holding true to his word that he wants to see this done legislatively. So, it is entirely possible we will be standing side-by-side with Sheriff Gualtieri and some of his colleagues this session.

I'll say it again: What a difference a few months makes!

It's largely thanks to the members of *Florida for Care*. You've gotten us to where we are and you'll get us to where we're going. Together, we are going to pass a medical marijuana law in Florida.

All my fingers and toes are crossed for this session, because I don't think I can survive another campaign! ■

Ben Pollara is executive director of Florida for Care.



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NEWS BRIEFS



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US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who attended high school in Florida, agrees "marijuana can be helpful."

Surgeon general confirms medical marijuana works

DR. VIVEK H MURTHY, surgeon general of the United States, stated in an interview with *CBS This Morning*, "We have some preliminary data showing that for certain medical conditions and symptoms, that marijuana can be helpful." While the nation's top doctor did not endorse the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes, he believes that policy should be driven by science and more evidence should be on the way thanks to the growing number of states that have passed medical marijuana laws.

AAP: Reschedule marijuana

IN A POLICY STATEMENT from January, the American Academy of Pediatrics asks the Drug Enforcement Administration to reclassify marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule II in order for more medical research to be done.

It stated, "AAP recognizes that marijuana may currently be an option for cannabinoid administration for children with life-limiting or severely debilitating conditions and for whom current therapies are inadequate." The AAP has the largest pediatric publishing program in the world.

Florida sheriffs soften stance on medical marijuana

AFTER SB 528 WAS FILED, the Florida Sheriffs Association announced its stance on medical marijuana law in a statement it calls Core Legislative Principles on Medical Marijuana. Last year, the FSA was one of the leading opponents of Amendment 2. However, President David Shoar stated, "Sheriffs are ready to work with the citizens who serve in the Florida Legislature in developing a law that will help those truly in need, while not increasing the supply of marijuana that drives drug addiction and crime. Floridians should expect its authorized medications to be safe, and reliable." For more information on the principles, visit www.flsheriffs.org.



Bipartisan congressional bill to give military vets easier access in legal states

ON FEBRUARY 2, 2015, a bill was introduced in the US House of Representatives that would allow US Department of Veterans Affairs doctors to recommend medical marijuana to military veterans in states where it is legal. Cosponsor Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) stated, "We should be allowing these wounded veterans access to the medicine that will help them survive and thrive, including medical mari-

Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) filed a bill authorizing physicians to recommend medical marijuana to vets.



juana — not treating them like criminals and forcing them into the shadows. It's shameful." Currently, VA doctors are prohibited from aiding patients in seeking or using medical marijuana, but the Veterans Equal Access Act will give doctors the ability to recommend it to vets who suffer from serious injuries or chronic conditions.

American Indian tribe posed to join medical marijuana industry

LAST DECEMBER, A FEDERAL JUSTICE Department memo became public stating that sovereign Indian nations can choose to grow or sell marijuana on tribal lands without fear of federal harassment. Now, the Pinoleville Pomo nation is expected to "break ground on a \$10 million, 100,000-square-foot greenhouse," says Barry Brautman, president of Foxbarry Companies, a group of Kansas-based operations that specialize in developing native business enterprises.

Derek Peterson, the CEO of Terra Tech, a hydroponic farming company with operations in New Jersey and California, stated, "Tribes have sovereignty, which means a better level of safety, a better level of protection for investors."

Investors are likely to go to a state like Florida, which has low supply, high demand, native lands, and dense population. All eyes are on Pinoleville as they forge the path for tribal nations to make way in the industry. ■

WINTER CONFERENCE

Leaders launch new medical marijuana industry

BY JEFF BORG

A CORE GROUP OF LEADERS IN Florida's emerging medical marijuana industry learned from other experts, did some networking, and helped launch *Florida for Care*, which advocates for patients and a well-regulated medical-marijuana system, by attending the organization's inaugural Winter Conference December 16–17, 2014, at the InterContinental hotel in downtown Miami.

Attendees mingled at an evening reception. In the morning, Ethan Nadelmann, executive director at Drug Policy Alliance, gave an insightful keynote address, and Ben Pollara, campaign director, spoke about ballot initiatives.

Presenters and facilitators were Rene Alvarez, advertising professor at Miami International University of Art and Design; Jeff Clemens, state senator for the central Palm Beach County coast; Ray Dominguez, owner of Complete Hydroponics; Craig Frank, expert in public companies; Brian Franklin, president of Impact Politics; Joe Geller, state representative for southeast Broward and northeast Miami-Dade; Jill Harris, managing director of strategic initiatives for Drug Policy Alliance; Jim Manfre, sher-

From left: Conference keynote speaker Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of Drug Policy Alliance, said, "People care about civil liberties and civil rights, and that intersects with an emerging business," and Flagler Sheriff Jim Manfre with Legislative Director Dan Rogers, Representative Joe Geller, Jill Harris of Drug Policy Alliance, and Brian Franklin of Impact Politics address the Winter Conference attendees.

iff of Flagler County; Kathryn Mehaffey, attorney for municipalities; Ted Rebholz, investor in health sectors including cannabis; Dan Rogers, director of legislative affairs at *Florida for Care*. The conference was organized by Eric Stevens, deputy executive director of *Florida for Care*.

ETHAN NADELMANN

"This is the biggest civil liberties issue of our time," said Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of Drug Policy Alliance, a leading organization against the US war on drug users. Keynoting the conference, he said that opening up medical marijuana will transform the dialog around drug policy. "Ultimately we will end prohibition in this society."

He holds BA, JD, and Ph.D degrees from Harvard University and a master's degree in international relations from the London School of Economics.

In Jamaica, he addressed businesspeople at a meeting of the small Negril Chamber of Commerce. "If Jamaican businesspeople don't take action," he joked, "Jamaica will be importing pot from the US." This January, the Jamaican cabinet approved a bill to decriminalize possession, clearing the way for legal medical marijuana there.

"One day people will look back at this time, prohibition, and say, 'What the hell was that all about?'" Nadelmann predicted. "A problem will be if people assume this is inevitable. Even people who voted against medical marijuana think it's inevitable.

"Nobody has ever run such a masterful campaign as Ben Pollara did, organizing

a team and going against \$6 million from Sheldon Adelson. Absent Ben's leadership, you would never have gotten 58 percent."

"You are at an intersection: People care about civil liberties and civil rights, and that intersects with an emerging business worth millions or billions a year. That doesn't happen with other social-justice movements. "Building this industry is not just good for business," he said. "It's the right thing to do. First and foremost, understanding people's individual rights, their right to grow their own, right to consume if they want."

BEN POLLARA

Florida for Care Executive Director Ben Pollara introduced leaders of the organization: Bianca Garza and Brian Franklin in communications, Vanessa Moffatt in operations, Dan Rogers in legislation and policy, and Nick Merlino and Elias Egozi in the new campaign.

He cited a poll showing people who voted "no" in 2014 often cited alleged loopholes. "Our internet advertising killed," he said. Internet people were more likely to vote "yes" than people who just saw TV. In a presidential turnout model, we would win with 63 percent.

He pointed out that *The Tampa Bay Times* said the Legislature needed to act on the issue and that many editorial boards claimed it was good but did not belong in the Constitution. By making a legislative push, we address that point.

Meanwhile, our goal is to collect 100,000 signatures in time for the session. That is the club we carry, since Tallahassee does not want us on the ballot.



DAN ROGERS

Dan Rogers, director of legislative affairs and policy, reported the good news that the Florida Senate was more receptive than we had thought. The bad news was the House, where the speaker wanted to ban smoking.

He discussed licensure, especially the statewide versus local-control models, saying that we lean toward local. “Dixie County doesn’t care if Dade County has dispensaries, and Dade doesn’t care if Dixie bans them. Local governments are more responsive to their own needs.”

JIM MANFRE

Flagler County Sheriff Jim Manfre was a prosecutor. He reported progress within the Florida Sheriffs Association, which appeared more open to legislation. He noted that sheriffs ran for election and voters favored Amendment 2 even in conservative counties. He suggested we collect signatures and make it clear we’re heading to the ballot if the Legislature does not address the issue.

To a question on police versus users, he said, “Generally their issue is a cultural one. They’ve spent 30 or 40 years arresting people for drugs.” To a question on drug policy, he said jail is not the place to house drug users.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS, LUNCH

The breakout session Public Companies and the Cannabis Industry was led by Craig Frank, CEO of Alternative Fuels Americas. He said public companies had

been demonized as too profit oriented but they simply represented an alternate structure that was highly regulated, transparent, and a good way for people to participate. “Our company has 3,700 shareholders engaging in the cannabis space,” he said. The public sector “broadens participation, widens the interest pool, deepens the talent pool, and enhances the industry’s status.”

The breakout session Local Government featured investor Ted Rebholz, State Representative Joe Geller, and municipal attorney Kathryn Mehafeff. Participants discussed cities, taxes, employment, security, zoning, transportation, real estate, Denver, and Amsterdam. Positive revenue was cited. It was reported that Dania Beach, Lauderdale by the Sea, Weston, Miramar, and Coral Gables had started to adopt regulations.

Over lunch, legislators shared insights. Senator Jeff Clemens, Democrat of Palm Beach County, spoke on his many tries to normalize medical marijuana. Representative Joe Geller, Democrat of southeastern Broward and northeastern Miami-Dade, was first elected in 2014.

JILL HARRIS

Jill Harris, of Drug Policy Alliance, discussed recent marijuana elections. In the 2014 initiatives: the District of Columbia received 69.5 percent of the vote; Florida got 57.6 percent; Oregon, 55.9; and Alaska, 52.3. Florida Governor Rick Scott won just 48.2 percent.

Lessons learned: marijuana was more popular than any candidate; we can win in nonpresidential years; we can win in

red states. Harris said the message to politicians was, “You don’t have to run from this issue; don’t have to be so cowardly.”

She said we can move voters with the right message. In some places, the message was, Safer than alcohol. In others, Free police for serious crime. In others, End racial disparity in enforcement. Oregon voters thought law enforcement supported the initiative because it didn’t have money for media.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The breakout session Online Marketing and the Marijuana Industry was led by Brian Franklin of Impact Politics, and Rene Alvarez of Miami International University of Art and Design. Online marketing works when timeframes are longer; direct mail and television act more quickly. Online allows micro-targeting geographically and demographically, except with seniors, who are just now getting on Facebook. Online can direct traffic to a web site for details, and success can be measured as votes, clicks, signups, funds, or information. Digital media is best for testing and measuring.

The breakout session The Future of Hydroponics Technology was led by Ray Dominguez, owner of Complete Hydroponics. He began developing and testing nutrient formulas in 2006 and launched his Miami-Dade company in 2012. He discussed formulations to enhance performance in terms of quality, quantity, and consistency of produce, as well as speed of growth and profitability. ■

Jeff Borg is the editor of FFC News.



JEFF BORG

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Support from voters plus credible threat of 2016 amendment spur state legislators to act on medical marijuana law

BY DAN ROGERS

LAST NOVEMBER, 58 PERCENT OF Florida’s voters supported the legalization of medical marijuana. Although an overwhelming majority, the vote fell short of the 60 percent needed for ratification. With efforts for a new ballot initiative underway, polls continue to show support for a new medical marijuana amendment and it appears legislators are paying attention. *Florida for Care* has been working dili-



JEFF BORG

Now in committee, Senate Bill 528 is the best hope for patients.

gently since last summer to prepare for this upcoming session. Our blue-ribbon commission helped us develop policy

positions, and we have secured strong Republican sponsors to carry the legislation: Senator Jeff Brandes and Representatives Greg Steube and John Wood.

The legislative session begins in March and lasts for only 60 days, so it is important for a bill to start moving through the committee process early in the session. Our meetings with individual legislators on key committees have been encouraging. While we can’t predict the final outcome, there are hopeful signs the Legislature is preparing to have a discussion on this issue.

The positive news from Tallahassee isn’t by chance. The Legislature would not be considering this issue if it were not for all the hard work done to secure 58 percent of Florida voters in support and the credible threat of another constitutional amendment on the 2016 ballot.

We will continue to serve as a resource for policy makers and staff as they seek to develop and support a medical marijuana regime. The opportunity is upon us to set the standard for what a state medical marijuana system can function most effectively. ■

Dan Rogers is the director of legislative affairs and policy for Florida for Care.

DAN ROGERS. Meet Florida for Care’s man in Tallahassee



JEFF BORG

DURING FLORIDA FOR CARE’s Winter Conference in Miami, Dan Rogers briefed participants on proposed state statute language and our expectations for action in the Florida Senate and House of Representatives regarding medical marijuana in the 2015 legislative session.

Now the organization’s director of legislative affairs and policy, Rogers worked for the Florida Legislature from 2008 to 2014, serving in the offices of Senator Geraldine Thompson and Representatives Mary Brandenburg and Steve Perman as their senior legislative assistant.

In prior assignments, he worked for Public Affairs Consultants, Cornerstone Solutions, and the Florida Democratic Party.

AMENDMENT UPDATE

New petition drive launched for amendment on 2016 ballot

BY BIANCA GARZA

UNITED FOR CARE SUPPORTS Florida Senate Bill 528, but that doesn't mean they are going to sit on their hands while legislators negotiate the details of SB 528 and HB 683. The group, powered by 11,000 volunteers, is actively gathering signatures on the petition entitled Use of Marijuana for Debilitating Medical Conditions.

The language of this petition is somewhat different from the previous petition, which failed narrowly last year. According to United for Care's state director, Elias Egozi, "The language has been changed to clarify what we and the majority of Floridians knew to be true. It's an effort to thwart our opposition's previous arguments."

Since the language has been altered, the petition collection must begin from the beginning. The language was approved in January and supporters have to collect near 70,000 in order to have a mandatory state Supreme Court hearing by January 2016. If approved by the Court, nearly 700,000 petitions will be needed to make it onto the ballot for Floridians to vote.

"We have collected about 12,000 signatures. A quarter of those are from mail-ins and the remainder we've collected through our grassroots effort," said Egozi, with only six weeks on the ground so far. "We want Floridians to have access to medical marijuana sooner rather than later. If that means a sensible statute, then great! But we are not going to wait around to see how legislation pans out," he said. ■



UNITEDFORCARE



JEFF BORG

United for Care State Director Elias Egozi organizes petitions for 2016 ballot measure.

FLORIDA CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT Use of Marijuana for Debilitating Medical Conditions

BALLOT SUMMARY

"Allows medical use of marijuana for individuals with debilitating medical conditions as determined by a licensed Florida physician. Allows caregivers to assist patients' medical use of marijuana. The Department of Health shall register and regulate centers that produce and distribute marijuana for medical purposes and shall issue identification cards to patients and caregivers. Applies only to Florida law. Does not immunize violations of federal law or any non-medical use, posses-

sion or production of marijuana."

WHAT'S NEW?

There are no major functionality changes between the 2014 amendment and the current proposed language. Even though parental consent requirements exist under state law, the authors of the petition have added additional protection by requiring the Department of Health to verify parental consent. Though nothing in the 2014 amendment immunized doctors from negligently recommending

medical marijuana, the new language more specifically states that negligence and malpractice are not subject to immunity under the law. Under the 2014 amendment, the rules and procedures for approving caregivers were, by default, tasked to the DoH. Under the new language, the department is specifically required to establish qualifications and standards for caregivers, including the stated ability to conduct appropriate background checks. In short, the authors have made explicit what they always knew to be true.

PATIENT HIGHLIGHTS

Catherine Jordan survives ALS thanks to medical cannabis

CATHERINE E JORDAN, PRESIDENT of the Florida Cannabis Action Network, leads the state's oldest continually operating cannabis-policy reform organization, advocating for the full value of the whole plant. As a dedicated advocate, she has met with elected officials in her local districts, Tallahassee, and Washington, including Governors Jeb Bush and Rick Scott.

Jordan was a well-respected hairdresser in her Delaware hometown when she found that she couldn't control her hands. The 1986 diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease) came as a death sentence. Doctors told Jordan to put "her house in order." A diagnosis of ALS meant three to five years to live, with the likelihood that she would die drowning in her saliva.

Jordan took her fate into her own hands. She traveled to Florida intending to save up enough muscle relaxants to die with dignity, at a time of her own choosing. On a beach near Bradenton, Florida, she smoked a strain of cannabis called Myakka Gold that halted the progress of her disease.

"I will do this until the day I die, but I don't want to die doing this," said Jordan, reflecting on her years of advocacy. Modern science has now proven what she knew all along: Cannabis is an effective treatment for neurological diseases like ALS, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's.

Make no mistake, Florida's medical cannabis legislation is thanks to Jordan. A 2013 raid on her home became a public referendum on the issue and led to a court's extending her medical-necessity defense to her husband, Robert, allowing him to cultivate cannabis on her behalf.

The Jordans, currently residing in the



Catherine Jordan, president of Florida Cannabis Action Network and the face of medical marijuana patients in Florida, has been a dedicated advocate for reform from Bradenton to Tallahassee to Washington.

Bradenton area, are active members of the 100KStrong.net Veterans for Cannabis Project, Vietnam Brotherhood, and numerous drug policy reform groups.

Today, Catherine Jordan is the face of medical cannabis users in Florida.



Patsy Rodriguez says medical cannabis would ease symptoms of MS.

Medical cannabis would help artist Patsy Rodriguez continue her work

BASED IN SOUTH FLORIDA, ARTIST Patsy Rodriguez is renowned for mosaics and tile painting. You can find her work in parks, community centers, schools, museums, and sites throughout the country. What most people don't realize when enjoying Rodriguez's art is that she lives with multiple sclerosis.

MS is a degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system. For her, muscle spasms could go on for months. Electric shocks would shoot to her brain when she would bend over or move her neck. She ended up in the emergency room after her stomach lining was "eaten away" by the medications she was prescribed.

Rodriguez knows that medical marijuana, when used as recommended by a licensed physician, can help alleviate her symptoms. In an interview she stated, "At this time, no one would insure you with MS and you weren't even able to get vaccines for fear they could trigger an exacerbation. Is it any wonder that I began looking for alternative ways to manage this disease?"

"I found out that the MS Society supports the rights of people with MS to access medical marijuana, as studies show it is effective as the treatment of chronic pain and spasticity. In fact, surveys show 50 percent of people with MS have done just that.

"Of the four states in which I have been a resident, three have approved the use of cannabis for medicinal reasons," she says. "Unfortunately, Florida isn't one of them."

In order for Patsy Rodriguez to continue creating her art and working with children who have disabilities, she is relying on the efforts of *Florida for Care* and its members to bring sensible medical marijuana law, such as Senate Bill 528, to Florida. ■

PATIENT HIGHLIGHTS

Epilepsy Foundation president supports SB 528 for medical use

BY KAREN BASHA EGOZI

IMAGINE A SEIZURE STRIKING without warning while attending your son's or daughter's soccer game. This is the fear that more than 375,000 Floridians and their families face every day involving epilepsy.

The mission of the Epilepsy Foundation of Florida is to eliminate as much uncertainty for our members as possible. Epilepsy doesn't always have a cure; as a result, those impacted by the disease are desperate for any treatments that reduce symptoms.

We applaud state Senator Jeff Brandes for his recent proposal to expand access to medical marijuana to those who are most deserving.



Egozi

Last year, lawmakers led by Representatives Matt Gaetz and Katie Edwards passed the Compassionate Medical Cannabis Act, also known as Charlotte's Web,

which made legal a strain of noneuphoric marijuana for Floridians suffering from epilepsy and other seizure disorders.



However, the rules that the Florida Department of Health drafted in order to implement the law were challenged in court and ultimately thrown out, leaving families desperate for a new treatment option, but without an alternative.

Today, 12 percent of Americans with epilepsy live in Florida, and indicators are that this number may increase, not only because baby boomers will age but also because Florida is home to the second largest veterans population. It is estimated that 20 percent of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan experienced traumatic brain injury, the leading cause of epilepsy. It is in our state's interest to address this condition.

We humbly ask the Legislature to continue its good work in expanding treatment options to ensure that epilepsy victims have access to new medications with medical supervision, allowing them to live better and more productive everyday lives. ■

Karen Basha Egozi is president of the Epilepsy Foundation of Florida.

HYMAN FAMILY. Why Becca's family supports Senate Bill 528

BY SETH HYMAN

PREVIOUS LEGISLATION, such as SB 1030, was a great start, and we had so much hope. Unfortunately, there is still no light at the end of the tunnel on when low-THC/high-CBD oil will be available in Florida. Even if the Department of Health works things out with all of the rules, most likely it will be over a year before safe medicine will be available.

The problem with SB 1030 is that it limits the THC. I know many families outside Florida who have had success with medical marijuana oil to control seizures, but THC levels are above what Florida law allows.

I want my daughter and patients like her to have all the options and not be limited by THC levels. If Becca needs more THC to control her epilepsy, then she should have the right. Anything is better than the toxic medications Becca has tried, which do not work or make her seizures worse. Senate Bill 528 clearly gives patients more options. I just hope and pray that SB 528 is passed this session.

Isn't it great the Epilepsy Foundation has come out in support of SB 528? I give a lot of credit to it for coming out in support of medical marijuana oil for the treatment of epilepsy. There is no better national foundation.



Becca Hyman, center, needs SB 528 to pass the Legislature.

BUSINESS PROFILE

Michael Smullen launches AltMed after child struggles with pharmaceuticals

ALTMED LLC IS AN INTEGRATED, science-based Florida company seeking to bring compassion, community engagement, and pharmaceutical-industry precision to the development, production, and dispensing of medical cannabis.

Inspired by a firsthand connection with patient and caretaker communities and driven by the opportunity to make a difference, AltMed cofounder Michael Smullen chose to launch a professional-standards alternative-medicine com-

pany after experiencing his own child's struggles with the pharmaceuticals available to treat epilepsy.

According to David Wright, president and CEO, in addition to serving on the executive committee of *Florida for Care*, AltMed is working with the Florida Sheriffs Association, medical marijuana executives, and other organizations and stakeholders, "to ensure there is a comprehensive bill that meets the needs of Florida patients. At the same time, AltMed is preparing to provide safety and security for Florida patients by ensuring that future Florida cannabis medicines are properly dispensed."

In addition, AltMed continues to have representation at the SB 1030 hearings. Ron Watson is AltMed's governmental affairs specialist, based in Tallahassee. Wright says, "He (Watson) is leading our efforts in the Florida Capitol, advocating for expedient passage of an appropriate



JEFF BORG

AltMed cofounder Michael Smullen participates in the Winter Conference.

Florida medical cannabis bill."

AltMed's mission is to produce safe, reliable, and effective cannabis-based therapies with pharmaceutical quality and consistency. "AltMed continues to work diligently with *Florida for Care* to ensure that patients in Florida receive the medicine they need as soon as possible," says Wright. ■



Wright



Petron

ALTMED. Meet the management and medical leadership

EXECUTIVE TEAM

RMICHAEL SMULLEN.

Cofounder and executive chairman, Smullen began his career in sales and management at Boehringer Ingelheim, gaining insight and experience with Smith, Kline & French, Fujisawa, Synergen, and MedImmune. As senior vice president at startup MedImmune, he made major changes to operations, training, managed care, and distribution. His strategic approach to growth took MedImmune from \$35 million per year in 1996 to more than \$1 billion

in less than a decade, positioning the company for its \$15 billion acquisition by AstraZeneca in 2007.

BILL PETRON. Cofounder and managing director, Petron began his career as director of commercial mortgages for Household International, managing origination and subsequent disposition of a mortgage portfolio with 1,000 properties and a value of \$1 billion. He purchased MSI Integrated Solutions, a Brazilian electrical systems supplier, and transformed it from 20 employees and sales of \$2 million to 400

employees and sales over \$100 million. He formed Magnus Logistics Solutions, which runs supply chains around the world.

DAVID WRIGHT. President and CEO, Wright has over 40 years of management, manufacturing, marketing, and product launch experience in pharmaceuticals and biotech. He served as president and CEO at Pharmathene, president and COO at Gen Vec, president at Guilford Pharmaceuticals, and EVP at MedImmune. He held marketing positions at major pharmaceutical firms

and served on the board of Achillion Pharmaceuticals.

MEDICAL TEAM

VALERIE RIDDLE, MD. Board-certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases, Riddle joined AltMed in April 2014 to serve as chief medical officer.

MATTHEW NESSETTI, MD. Board-certified medical psychologist and psychopharmacologist, Nessetti brings a focus on integrated health, wellness, and prevention to his role as AltMed's Florida medical director.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Former lieutenant governor advocates to see a medical marijuana law

BY JEFF KOTTKAMP

I AM A PROUD MEMBER OF THE Republican Party and very excited to work with *Florida for Care* on this very important mission. We have a unique opportunity to advance legislation that I know you believe in — legislation that is both compassionate and responsible and that responds to the will of a majority of Floridians, the 58 percent who supported medical marijuana in the last election.

My firsthand experience in state government is unique in the halls of the state Capitol, having served both in the Executive Office of the Governor as Florida's 17th lieutenant governor (2007–2011) and as a former member of the House of Representatives (2000–2006). As lieutenant governor, I had oversight responsibility for the Governor's Office of Drug Control where I pushed for the passage of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program in an effort to combat Florida's growing prescription drug abuse problem. I also led an interagency Prescription Drug Task Force and worked closely with local, state, and federal law enforcement to shut down pill mills in Florida. As lieutenant governor, I also had oversight over the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, was chairman of Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet, and led Florida's aerospace



Republican Jeff Kottkamp, former lieutenant governor of Florida, now favors legal medical marijuana.

economic development efforts as chairman of Space Florida.

As a member of the House of Representatives, I served as chairman of the

Judiciary Committee, helped pass significant “get tough on crime” legislation, and cosponsored legislation to increase penalties for violent felony offenders as well as for crimes against children and the elderly. In addition to my experience in public service, I am an AV-rated attorney and have been licensed to practice law in Florida for 25 years.

Beyond my professional experience, I have a personal story that fuels my efforts. It is a story that resonates with so many other Floridians who want a comprehensive medical marijuana law passed to help the people they love. I watched my mother suffer with cancer for 10 years. Mom was tough and brave and rarely complained. But I know she was in constant pain. There is nothing worse than watching someone you love suffer. Had there been a safe, legal option to bring my mom relief with medical marijuana as recommended by a doctor, we would have taken advantage of it.

I promise to work tirelessly to pass legislation to bring compassionate relief to the people of Florida who are very sick and suffering. But we can't do this alone. We need your help. That is why I hope you will continue your membership with *Florida for Care* and support our efforts. I hope you will also consider asking your friends and business associates to join us in this important mission of mercy. With your help, we can win this noble fight. ■

Jeff Kottkamp served as Florida's lieutenant governor from 2007 to 2011 and as a member of the Florida House of Representatives from 2000 to 2006.

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MAKE IT HAPPEN: Join *Florida for Care*

Membership benefits

- Attend events listed in the chart (fee per event)
- Vote in annual elections
- Access online member portal
- Join conference calls with special guests
- Get email updates
- Get policy and regulatory updates
- Get political representation
- Attend networking events
- Get member discounts
- Get elevated name recognition
- Use FFC member seal in promotional materials

Membership details

- Access events, strategy sessions, and calls as listed in the chart below (fee per event)
- Pay yearly with a discount or conveniently each month
- Ask about our Young Professionals rate for members 18-29

Membership levels in full by March 1, 2015 or down/monthly	FFC Online	Bimonthly newsletter	Semiannual conference	Breakfasts/ lunches	Network events	Conference calls	Email updates	Founders Club meets
General member (GM) \$1,500 or \$250 / \$100/mo.	yes	yes	yes	2	2	monthly	biweekly	
Elite member (EM) \$5,000 or \$1,400 / \$300/mo.	yes	yes	yes	3	4	monthly	biweekly	
Leaders Council (LC) \$10,000 or \$1,600 / \$700/mo.	yes	yes	yes	4	6	monthly	weekly	1
Founders Club (FC) \$25,000 or \$7,000 / \$1,500/mo.	yes	yes	yes	6	12	biweekly	weekly	3
Legion of Legacy (LL) \$40,000 or \$16,000 / \$2,000/mo.	yes	yes	yes	6	12	weekly	daily	6
Executive Board (EB) \$100,000 or \$28,000 / \$6,000/mo.	yes	yes	yes	6	12	weekly	daily	6

Founders Club, Legion of Legacy, and Executive Board members receive admission with one guest to all events, one-on-one calls with campaign leaders, and other benefits.

Join at www.floridaforcare.org/contribute

Contact Eric Stevens at eric@floridaforcare.org with questions on how to get involved.



DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Join *Florida for Care*: Your membership can push medical marijuana over the top

BY ERIC STEVENS

THE TIME IS NOW FOR A SENSIBLE medical marijuana law in Florida. All of our work the past two years has put us in the position that we are in today. We now have Republicans in Florida filing substantial bills for medical marijuana in the Senate (SB 528) and in the House (HB 683).

Florida for Care was founded in 2014 to advocate for the implementation of a strong, well-regulated, medical marijuana system for the state of Florida based on the work of *United for Care*. Though Amendment 2 did not get the 60 percent needed to become part of the state Constitution, 58 percent of Floridians have spoken, and we are currently working with legislators in Tallahassee to make sure a law is passed based on what more than 3.3 million Floridians said they wanted at the ballot box.

Your participation means being represented among other responsible community leaders committed to bringing about a legitimate regulated system for medical cannabis in Florida. You will band together with everyone who has invested in bringing this to Florida. You will be joined up with the largest group of professionals in this state, and you will have the backing and voice of millions of our fellow Floridians. We will lead a unified, coordinated effort, and as one large voice, our influence will be far greater than the sum of the parts could ever be separately.

Membership with us should be a no brainer for anyone who cares about having medical marijuana in Florida anytime soon, no matter where he or she lives. You will not only stay in the know with what is happening but also meet and interact with many others who are involved with medical marijuana



Stevens

in Florida, from business to law making, and people who are actively involved in other states.

We always keep our members informed of the latest happenings via regular conference calls, email, a custom web site, newsletters, and events. See a full list of membership benefits at the end of this newsletter. But know that basic membership is available for \$1,000 a year or just \$250 down. Anyone you bring in as a member will count towards your next membership level as well, because we want everyone to bring in more members.

With your help, we can continue to bring the best experts to Florida to push this issue forward. We will go to Tallahassee with one large united voice to push these bills through. But we need you on board. ■

Eric Stevens is deputy executive director of Florida for Care.



FLORIDA FOR CARE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Comprised of our most committed supporters and leaders, this merit-based committee helps formulate and execute the strategic vision of *Florida for Care*.

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Join *Florida for Care* by visiting www.floridaforcare.org/contribute. For questions about the Young Professionals rate for members 18-29 or other subjects, contact Eric Stevens at eric@floridaforcare.org.

General member (GM) \$1,500
Elite member (EM) \$5,000
Leaders Council (LC) \$10,000
Founders Club (FC) \$25,000
Legion of Legacy (LL) \$40,000
Executive Board (EB) \$100,000

**FLORIDA
FOR CARE**

FLORIDA FOR CARE

108 East Jefferson Street, Suite E
Tallahassee, Florida 32301



DAY OF COMPASSION

Save the date: March 18, 2015

Join us for a day filled with progressive movement!

In light of SB 528 and HB 683, we will be meeting with legislators, holding a press conference, and ending with a social reception at a local restaurant/lounge.

Stand by for details.

For information on becoming a *Florida for Care* member, contact Eric Stevens, deputy executive director, at eric@floridaforcare.org.

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