

Laetrile legalization advances; marijuana attempt withdrawn

By Randy Essex

After long and emotional debate Friday, the Legislature advanced a bill allowing Laetrile use in the state, and did not consider an amendment proposing the legalization of marijuana for therapeutic uses.

The amendment, introduced and then withdrawn by Neligh Sen. John DeCamp, would allow doctors to prescribe marijuana to glaucoma patients and to cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy treatments.

DeCamp said he withdrew the amendment so supporters of the Laetrile bill could have their "fair shot" to advance the bill, and so no one could accuse him of trying to hurt the bill's chances.

He told the senators he would introduce the amendment if the bill failed to advance. But since the bill advanced by a 25-12 vote, DeCamp said he isn't sure what he is going to do with his marijuana amendment.

National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws State Director Don Fiedler said he had hoped the Laetrile measure would fail to advance so its supporters might be forced to turn to therapeutic marijuana supporters for compromise votes.

Fiedler said he still is hopeful that the amendment will be discussed on the floor. "We've worked too hard not to have any floor debate," he said.

But, if the amendment is not discussed or is voted down, Fiedler said, his group will push for an interim study of the therapeutic effects of marijuana, with an eye on introduction of a separate therapeutic marijuana bill next year.

Present for the debate Friday was Robert Randall of Washington D.C., who is supplied marijuana by the federal government for his glaucoma condition. Also present for the debate were about 75 people wearing "Laetrile for Life" badges.

The bill was heavily amended during debate, and survived a kill attempt by Hemingford Sen. Sam Cullan, 10-28.

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