Proposition 19

Changes California Law to Legalize Marijuana and Allow It to Be Regulated and Taxed. Initiative Statute.

BACKGROUND

Federal Law. Federal laws classify marijuana as an illegal substance and provide criminal penalties for various activities relating to its use. These laws are enforced by federal agencies that may act independently or in cooperation with state and local law enforcement agencies.

State Law and Proposition 215. Under current state law, the possession, cultivation, or distribution of marijuana generally is illegal in California. Penalties for marijuana-related activities vary depending on the offense. For example, possession of less than one ounce of marijuana is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine, while selling marijuana is a felony and may result in a prison sentence.

In November 1996, voters approved Proposition 215, which legalized the cultivation and possession of marijuana in California for medical purposes. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2005, however, that federal authorities could continue to prosecute California patients and providers engaged in the cultivation and use of marijuana for medical purposes. Despite having this authority, the U.S. Department of Justice announced in March 2009 that the current administration would not prosecute marijuana patients and providers whose actions are consistent with state medical marijuana laws.

PROPOSAL

This measure changes state law to (1) legalize the possession and cultivation of limited amounts of marijuana for personal use by individuals age 21 or older, and (2) authorize various commercial marijuana-related activities under certain conditions. Despite these changes to state law, these marijuana-related activities would continue to be prohibited under federal law. These federal prohibitions could still be enforced by federal agencies. It is not known to what extent the federal government would continue to enforce them. Currently, no other state permits commercial marijuana-related activities for non-medical purposes.

State Legalization of Marijuana Possession and Cultivation for Personal Use

Under the measure, persons age 21 or older generally may (1) possess, process, share or transport up to one ounce of marijuana; (2) cultivate marijuana on private property in an area up to 25 square feet per private residence or parcel; (3) possess harvested and living marijuana plants cultivated in such an area; and (4) possess any items or equipment associated with the above activities. The possession and cultivation of marijuana must be solely for an individual's personal consumption and not for sale to others, and consumption of marijuana would only be permitted in a residence or other "non-public place." (One exception is that marijuana could be sold and consumed in licensed establishments, as discussed below.) The state and local governments could also authorize the possession and cultivation of larger amounts of marijuana.

State and local law enforcement agencies could not seize or destroy marijuana from persons in compliance with the measure. In addition, the measure states that no

SUBJECT TO COURT
ORDERED CHANGES

individual could be punished, fined, or discriminated against for engaging in any conduct permitted by the measure. However, it does specify that employers would retain existing rights to address consumption of marijuana that impairs an employee's job performance.

This measure sets forth some limits on marijuana possession and cultivation for personal use. For example, the smoking of marijuana in the presence of minors is not permitted. In addition, the measure would not change existing laws that prohibit driving under the influence of drugs or that prohibit possessing marijuana on the grounds of elementary, middle, and high schools. Moreover, a person age 21 or older who knowingly gave marijuana to a person age 18 through 20 could be sent to county jail for up to six months and fined up to $1,000 per offense. (The measure does not change existing criminal laws which impose penalties for adults who furnish marijuana to minors under the age of 18.)

Authorization of Commercial Marijuana Activities

The measure allows local governments to authorize, regulate, and tax various commercial marijuana-related activities. As discussed below, the state also could authorize, regulate, and tax such activities.

Regulation. The measure allows local governments to adopt ordinances and regulations regarding commercial marijuana-related activities—including marijuana cultivation, processing, distribution, transportation, and retail sales. For example, local governments could license establishments that could sell marijuana to persons 21 and

older. Local governments could regulate the location, size, hours of operation, and signs and displays of such establishments. Individuals could transport marijuana from a licensed marijuana establishment in one locality to a licensed establishment in another locality, regardless of whether any localities in between permitted the commercial production and sale of marijuana. However, the measure does not permit the transportation of marijuana between California and another state or country. An individual who was licensed to sell marijuana to others in a commercial establishment and who negligently provided marijuana to a person under 21 would be banned from owning, operating, being employed by, assisting, or entering a licensed marijuana establishment for one year. Local governments could also impose additional penalties or civil fines on certain marijuana-related activities, such as for violation of a local ordinance limiting the hours of operation of a licensed marijuana establishment.

Whether or not local governments engaged in this regulation, the state could, on a statewide basis, regulate the commercial production of marijuana. The state could also authorize the production of hemp, a type of marijuana plant that can be used to make products such as fabric and paper.

Taxation. The measure requires that licensed marijuana establishments pay all applicable federal, state, and local taxes and fees currently imposed on other similar businesses. In addition, the measure permits local governments to impose new general, excise, or transfer taxes, as well as benefit assessments and fees, on authorized marijuana-related activities. The purpose of such charges would be to raise revenue for

local governments and/or to offset any costs associated with marijuana regulation. In addition, the state could impose similar charges.

FISCAL EFFECTS

Many of the provisions in this measure permit, but do not require, the state and local governments to take certain actions related to the regulation and taxation of marijuana. Thus, it is uncertain to what extent the state and local governments would in fact undertake such actions. For example, it is unknown how many local governments would choose to license establishments that would grow or sell marijuana or impose an excise tax on such sales.

In addition, although the federal government announced in March 2009 that it would no longer prosecute medical marijuana patients and providers whose actions are consistent with Proposition 215, it has continued to enforce its prohibitions on non-medical marijuana-related activities. This means that the federal government could prosecute individuals for activities that would be permitted under this measure. To the extent that the federal government continued to enforce its prohibitions on marijuana, it would have the effect of impeding the activities permitted by this measure under state law.

Thus, the revenue and expenditure impacts of this measure are subject to significant uncertainty.

Impacts on State and Local Expenditures

Reduction in State and Local Correctional Costs. The measure could result in savings to the state and local governments by reducing the number of marijuana offenders incarcerated in state prisons and county jails, as well as the number placed under county probation or state parole supervision. These savings could reach several tens of millions of dollars annually. The county jail savings would be offset to the extent that jail beds no longer needed for marijuana offenders were used for other criminals who are now being released early because of a lack of jail space.

Reduction in Court and Law Enforcement Costs. The measure would result in a reduction in state and local costs for enforcement of marijuana-related offenses and the handling of related criminal cases in the court system. However, it is likely that the state and local governments would redirect their resources to other law enforcement and court activities.

Other Fiscal Effects on State and Local Programs. The measure could also have fiscal effects on various other state and local programs. For example, the measure could result in an increase in the consumption of marijuana, potentially resulting in an unknown increase in the number of individuals seeking publicly funded substance abuse treatment and other medical services. This measure could also have fiscal effects on state- and locally funded drug treatment programs for criminal offenders, such as drug courts. Moreover, the measure could potentially reduce both the costs and offsetting revenues of the state's Medical Marijuana Program, a patient registry that

identifies those individuals eligible under state law to legally purchase and consume marijuana for medical purposes.

Impacts on State and Local Revenues

The state and local governments could receive additional revenues from taxes, assessments, and fees from marijuana-related activities allowed under this measure. If the commercial production and sale of marijuana occurred in California, the state and local governments could receive revenues from a variety of sources in the ways described below.

- *Existing Taxes.* Businesses producing and selling marijuana would be subject to the same taxes as other businesses. For instance, the state and local governments would receive sales tax revenues from the sale of marijuana. Similarly, marijuana-related businesses with net income would pay income taxes to the state. To the extent that this business activity pulled in spending from persons in other states, the measure would result in a net increase in taxable economic activity in the state.

- *New Taxes and Fees on Marijuana.* As described above, local governments are allowed to impose taxes, fees, and assessments on marijuana-related activities. Similarly, the state could impose taxes and fees on these types of activities. (A portion of any new revenues from these sources would be offset by increased regulatory and enforcement costs related to the licensing and taxation of marijuana-related activities.)

As described earlier, both the enforcement decisions of the federal government and whether the state and local governments choose to regulate and tax marijuana would affect the impact of this measure. It is also unclear how the legalization of some marijuana-related activities would affect its overall level of usage and price, which in turn could affect the level of state or local revenues from these activities. Consequently, the magnitude of additional revenues is difficult to estimate. To the extent that a commercial marijuana industry developed in the state, however, we estimate that the state and local governments could eventually collect hundreds of millions of dollars annually in additional revenues.

SUBJECT TO COURT ORDERED CHANGES