

War on pot industry escalates to threats against media

By Michael Montgomery, California Watch

A U.S. attorney in Southern California says she is preparing to go after newspapers, radio stations and other media outlets that advertise medical marijuana dispensaries, an escalation in the Obama administration's newly invigorated war against the state's pot industry.

This month, U.S. attorneys representing four districts in California announced that the government would single out landlords and property owners who rent buildings or land where dispensaries sell or cultivators grow marijuana. Media outlets could be next.

U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy, whose district includes Imperial and San Diego counties, said marijuana advertising is the next area she's "going to be moving onto as part of the enforcement efforts in Southern California."

Duffy said she could not speak for the three other U.S. attorneys in the state, but noted their efforts have been coordinated so far.

Sacramento's U.S. attorney, Benjamin Wagner, told The Chronicle that newspapers "are not a focus of our enforcement efforts," and he has no plans to prosecute them for running ads. U.S. Attorney Andre Birotte of Los Angeles has not taken any actions against media outlets that advertise dispensaries, said spokesman Thom Mrozek.

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