

California medical pot advocates push bill to regulate legal dispensaries

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Medical marijuana advocates Saturday opened a three-day event to rally support to regulate a legal dispensary industry in California, spurred on by videotaped messages from two members of Congress who recently pushed an amendment to deny funds for federal raids on cannabis businesses.

About 200 people, including dispensary operators and people who use marijuana for medical conditions, turned out at a Sacramento labor hall in a conference to rally support for a bill to create a state oversight agency for cannabis business and make it harder for cities and counties to ban dispensaries.

Assemblyman Tom Ammiano, D-San Francisco, who passed the bill out of his public safety committee, said it faces difficult path to passage as state lawmakers shrink from the medical marijuana issue while “the (federal) Department of Justice is going rogue on us and the U.S. attorneys are participating in this spin cycle of reefer madness.”

Representatives of marijuana patients’ advocates Americans for Safe Access and a union organizing California marijuana workers, the United Food & Commercial Workers, used the event to attract volunteers to flood the Capitol on Monday to lobby lawmakers to pass Assembly Bill 2312, which is opposed by law enforcement groups.

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