

Nevada close to opening medicinal pot shops

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A Senate committee has cleared a bill to permit a network of medical marijuana dispensaries, but those who sell the drug will have to pay a \$20,000 licensing fee.

In 2000, voters approved a constitutional amendment to allow possession of medical marijuana if prescribed by a physician. But the law did not permit for dispensaries to distribute it.

State Sen. Mark Hutchinson, R-Las Vegas, said the initial fee for licensing a clinic will be \$20,000 with an annual renewal of \$5,000. The fees would give the state Health Division money to regulate dispensaries, and any excess would go to aid to public schools, he said.

The Senate Judiciary Committee on April 11 endorsed the bill, which would permit 40 dispensaries in Clark County and fewer in other counties.

Under the bill a lottery will be set up if applications exceed the limit. Nevada companies would receive preference.

Hutchinson said Senate Bill 374 establishes a system of “tight controls” to track the marijuana from seed to sale.

State Sen. Greg Bower, R-Reno, said there was a “disconnect” between the federal law that prohibits the sale of marijuana and the proposed state law. But he called allowing dispensaries the “next logical step” in carrying out Nevada’s constitutional amendment to allow medical marijuana.

Committee Chairman state Sen. Tick Segerblom, sponsor of the bill, said he has seen press reports that the governor would be open to considering the measure, which now goes to the full

Senate.

The bill originally suggested dispensaries be non-profit organizations, but that was changed to allow for-profit groups to run them. The initial bill also called for a \$5,000 license fee, which was raised to \$20,000 by an amendment adopted by the committee today.

Besides the authorized 40 clinics in Clark County, there would be a maximum of ten allowed in Washoe County, two in Carson City and one each in rural counties.