



**Illinois
Cannabis
Patients
Association**

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Department of Justice and American Medical Association speak on medical cannabis

Statements this fall from the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the American Medical Association (AMA) show the tide is shifting in favor of medical cannabis.

On October 19, the United States **Department of Justice** issued a written memo advising federal authorities that they ought not interfere in states that have protected patients whose doctors recommend cannabis, as long as the patient or provider is in “clear and unambiguous” compliance with state law. This reaffirms what Attorney General Eric Holder said was “American policy” in February and what President Obama promised to do while campaigning.

The DOJ memo states, in part: “As a general matter, pursuit of these priorities should not focus federal resources in your States on individuals whose actions are in clear and unambiguous compliance with existing state laws providing for the medical use of marijuana. For example, prosecution of individuals with cancer or other serious illnesses who use marijuana as part of a recommended treatment regimen consistent with applicable state law, or those caregivers in clear and unambiguous compliance with existing state law who provide such individuals with marijuana, is unlikely to be an efficient use of limited federal resources.”

In another significant development, on November 10 the **American Medical Association** (AMA) called for a review of cannabis’s Schedule I narcotic status.

The AMA House of Delegates resolution says, “Our AMA urges that marijuana’s status as a federal Schedule I controlled substance be reviewed with the goal of facilitating the conduct of clinical research and development of cannabinoid-based medicines and alternate delivery methods. This should not be viewed as an endorsement of state-based medical cannabis programs, the legalization of marijuana, or that scientific evidence on the therapeutic use of cannabis meets the current standards for a prescription drug product.”

The AMA adopted a report by its Council on Science and Public Health that noted, “short term controlled trials indicate that smoked cannabis reduces neuropathic pain, improves appetite and caloric intake, especially in patients with reduced muscle mass, and may relieve spasticity and pain in patients with multiple sclerosis.” The report also said “The U.S. Court of Appeals in *Conant v. Walters* recognized that physicians have a constitutionally-protected right to discuss the use of cannabis as a treatment option with their patients and to make an oral or written recommendation for medical marijuana, a policy supported by our AMA.”

This brings the AMA’s position much more in tune with current sentiments in the medical, scientific and academic communities with regard to the efficacy of medical cannabis. In 2008, the prestigious American College of Physicians called for a review of cannabis’ scheduling. Numerous other organizations support removing criminal penalties from medical cannabis, including the American Nurses Association, the American Academy of HIV Medicine, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Association, and the American Public Health Association.

These developments further illustrate the need to legally protect patients who are already using cannabis per their doctors’ recommendations. Lawmakers should feel comfortable voting in favor of Illinois’ medical cannabis bills, Senate Bill 1381 and House Bill 2514.

The Illinois Cannabis Patients Association – because patients are not criminals