

Brotherton gets negative feedback on legal pot

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Floor fights about the decriminalization of marijuana are almost an annual occurrence in the Michigan legislature, dating back to 1975.

Two years ago, state Rep. Rosetta Ferguson, a Detroit Democrat, heaved a glass ashtray at Rep. Perry Ballard, an Ann Arbor Democrat, and called him a "pothead" after he called her a liar during a heated debate.

The bill to reduce the penalty for possession of small amounts of marijuana was passed by both houses but defeated upon reconsideration after state Rep. Matthew McNeely delivered an impassioned speech about his son's death from a heroin overdose.

Last fall the Senate passed a decriminalization bill which failed to pass the House by two votes.

The same bill, with a few modifications, passed the Senate again by a vote of 20-14 May 23 and is presently in the House Judiciary Committee, where it is expected to be shelved until the legislature reconvenes in mid-September after the July 15 recess.

It's safe to say that the question of liberalizing the state's marijuana laws is still an emotional issue to both sup-

porters and opponents of decriminalization legislation.

LEGISLATORS IN the Southfield-Farmington area — including state representatives Wilbur Brotherton, and Joseph Forbes and state Sen. Doug Ross — predict the matter will come up for consideration in the House sometime in September.

Ross supported the bill which would make possession of up to 30 grams of marijuana (just over one ounce) a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$100 fine upon issuance of a ticket.

Forbes, an Oak Park Democrat, said he has supported previous bills that tried to reduce penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana and is prepared to do so again.

"I've got a lot of letters from teachers and principals who favor decriminalization," Forbes said.

"I say, let's go chase real criminals," Forbes has said, "instead of issuing felony warrants for kids."

Brotherton, on the other hand, said he will continue to oppose the liberalization of marijuana laws.

"I've been opposed to it for a long, long time," Brotherton said.

The Republican legislator from

Farmington said the problem he has with the proposed bill is that it allows persons to keep and smoke marijuana "repeatedly" in their home "but the sale of marijuana is still illegal."

"A person has to participate in an illegal act to smoke something legally in the privacy of their own home," Brotherton said. "That seems a little hard for me to swallow."

"Besides, anything we do along these lines tends to give it a stamp of approval from the legislature, that it is proper and probably safe. And that flies in the face of letters, articles and testimony I've heard from medical experts."

Brotherton said he considered sponsoring a bill which would have made it illegal for colleges and universities to deny enrollment to a student convicted of possession of marijuana. But, after talking to university spokesmen throughout the state, he said, he found no universities discriminating against dope smokers except law schools, which refuse felons.

Forbes said his mail has been generally favorable toward decriminalization, while Brotherton said he has mostly heard from city council people, police chiefs and school board officials who urge a no vote on decriminalization.

"I don't hear from the kids on this," Brotherton said. "People writing to me on it in support of the bill are mostly older people in their late 20s or early 30s, who are fairly successful and probably use (marijuana) pretty responsibly. I write them back saying, 'I'm sorry, I don't agree.' So, some of the supporters may feel writing to me is a waste of time."

AS THE BILL now stands, the maximum penalty for distributing or processing more than 30 grams of marijuana intended for sale is a felony punishable by four years in jail and \$2,000 fine. The same penalty could apply to persons who give away 100 or more grams free.

Persons in possession of more than 30 grams but less than 425 grams (about eight ounces) of marijuana could face a maximum misdemeanor fine of 90 days in jail and/or a \$100 fine.

One quirk in the proposed legislation would make a 17-year-old in possession of up to 30 grams of marijuana face stiffer penalties than offenders 18 and older.

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Greek archbishop comes to Holy Cross

Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America, will be the chief celebrant at services conducted at Farmington Hills Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church this Sunday.

Services will be at 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. The church is on Middlebelt between Ten and Eleven Mile roads.

Archbishop Iakovos is known for his work in the ecumenical movement. He is the personal representative of the ecumenical patriarch in international ecumenical meetings and seminars.

He is chairman of the Orthodox Ecumenical Commission for dialogue with the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran churches.

Through the years he has met with Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and

participated in the historic ceremonies in Rome which ended centuries-old "Anathema" between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches as a member of the ecumenical patriarch's delegation in 1965.

President Richard Nixon designated the Archbishop as a distinguished American in voluntary action in 1970 at a special White House ceremony.

Archbishop Iakovos was named "Clergyman of the Year" by Religious Heritage of America in 1970.

From 1959-68 he served as co-president of the World Council of Churches and is a central committee member of the World Council of Churches.

He was ordained a priest in 1940 and has served in parishes in Connecticut, New York, Missouri.

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