

Marijuana law subject to change

By [Rachel Jackson](#) | Published 09/12/12 11:30pm | Updated 09/12/12 11:59pm



Jones

The state medical marijuana law, which went into effect four years ago, could be at the center of legislative debates again this fall if some state lawmakers have their way.

The Michigan Medical Marijuana Act, which allows patients to use or grow marijuana for medical relief, has been a hot-button issue since its passage, prompting amendments from critics and rallies from supporters.

But a handful of recently proposed amendments could change some of the law's language and reach.

One bill could allow police to access cardholder registry records, which medical marijuana advocates argue would target both patients and caregivers.

[State Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge](#), said the act was misleading to voters in 2008, and he would like to see it challenged through a ballot vote if possible.

"In my opinion, if this was put back on the ballot, many people would change their vote, and it would probably not pass this time," Jones said.

Chemistry freshman Drew Murasky said there always is the possibility of people taking advantage of the law, but there is not enough reason to attempt to overturn it by a ballot vote.

"It's (ridiculous) that he is trying to restrict medical marijuana," he said. "Sure, it could be abused, but it's not really harming anyone — (marijuana) has many medicinal values."

Jones and other legislators have proposed amendments to prohibit the creation of marijuana bars or clubs — establishments where patients pay to smoke in the facility — and restrict marijuana cultivation near churches and schools.

But to David Clark, an Okemos, Mich., lawyer specializing in [medical marijuana](#), most critics who find fault with the law are generalizing about marijuana legalization as a whole and not specifying which portions of the 2008 act are poorly written.

Clark said claims of people abusing the act are not illegitimate, but saying voters were duped about the law four years ago is a “blanket of complaint.”

If voters had the choice to vote on the act again, the outcome likely would be the same as in 2008.

“I think over and over they would continue to pass it for the reasons they passed it the first time,” he said. “People believe marijuana can be an instrument to provide pain relief.”

Michael Komorn, president of the Michigan Medical Marijuana Association, said legislators are approaching the issue from a public safety perspective when it should be addressed as a public health concern.

“Their information in signing up ... to the state was never going to be released, and if it was, those people were not going to be prosecuted,” he said.

For legislators to examine the medical marijuana law differently than other health laws is unfair to patients who require it as a painkiller, Komorn said.

Jones said he has no problems with people using medical marijuana for chronic illnesses or debilitating pain, but he has heard too many cases of young people obtaining a license without a legitimate cause.

Komorn said the medical marijuana debate comes down to legislators acting beyond their means.

“How can you justify, four years into a program, changing the rules?” Komorn said. “That’s like saying in the ninth inning of a baseball game, ‘OK, we’re going to go to three balls and two strikes the rest of the way.’ It’s not fair.”