

Federal Medical Marijuana Prisoners and Cases

We got news through Cheri Sicard of www.MarijuanaLiferProject.org that federal prisoner Ricardo Montes is on [Obama's clemency list](#) and will be released in May 2017. Unfortunately, and inexplicably, his co-defendant Luke Scarmazzo's petition was denied last week. Luke has already served 10 years and isn't scheduled for release until 2027. [Read more.](#)

[Charles Lynch](#) filed an [Appropriations Act, 2015 Section 538 Motion](#) to end his prosecution for operating a medical marijuana dispensary in 2006. He is due in court in LA on February 2, 2017 in Los Angeles.

[Eddy Lepp was released in December 2016](#) following eight years of imprisonment.

NEWS:

[US Court Records Show Nearly 500 Years in Prison Time for Medical Marijuana Offenses](#)

LAST UPDATED: 1/19/2017

[Pending Cases in California and Elsewhere](#)
[In Prison](#)
[Sentenced or Case Terminated](#)
[Died Pending Prosecution](#)
[Raided by DEA \(partial list\)](#)

Current California Defendants and Prisoners:

Patricia Albright	Kevin Freeman	*Abraham & Winslow Norton
Mark & Ryan Bagdasarian	Dr. Mollie Fry & Dale Schafer	Hal Pilotte
*Chris Bartkowicz	Virgil Grant	*Aaron Sandusky
Geoffrey Bliss	Joshua Hester	*Luke Scarmazzo
Jennifer Diane Brown	John Lester Gross III	Bryan Schweder
Ron Chang	*James Dale Holland	John Shanks
*David Chavez	Thomas and David Jopson	Aimee Sisco
*Dustin Costa	*Charles Kisor	Steele and Theresa Smith
Matthew Davies	Charles Klaus	*Erik Stacy
Gino DiMatteo	Larry Kristich	John Melvin Walker
Robert Dodson, Jr	John & Kelsey Lane	Amanda Ventura
*Robert Duncan	Gary Maddox	*Jordan Wirtz
Yan Ebyam	*Ricardo Montes	*John Wayne Wyatt
Brian Everett	Eddy Lepp	Earl Zuniga

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* = currently incarcerated

Pending Cases in California and Elsewhere

- October 2014 - Federal court in Sacramento was the site of a 5-day [hearing on the Schedule I status of marijuana](#) in *United States v. Schweder, et. al.* Several defendants (among them: **Bryan Schweder, Paul Rockwell, Juan Madrigal Olivera, Manuel Madrigal Olivera, Fred W. Holmes, Effren A. Rodriguez, Rafael Camacho-Reyes, and Leonardo Tapia**) have served three years in prison awaiting trial, and a seventh, **Brian Picard**, is out on bail. All are charged in a "conspiracy" involving over 1000 plants grown in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, combined with plants being grown at Pickard and Schweders' properties. Schweder reportedly operated a 400-bed hospice for veterans in Sherman Oaks. [Read more about the testimony regarding marijuana's Schedule I status.](#) [Read court briefs.](#) The judge denied the descheduling motion on April 17, 2015. [Read more.](#)

Other defendants named in the case in [a 2011 detention order](#) are: **Victorino Betancourt-Meraz, Oseas Carnenas-Tolentino, Juan Cisneros-Vargas, Piliberto Espinosa-Tapia, Homero Lopez-Barron, Karen E. Niemi, Fernando Reyes-Mojica, and Osiel Valencia-Alvarez.**

- July 2014 - Oakland medical marijuana grower **Yan Ebyam** has struck a plea deal with the U.S. Attorney's office. He faced 10 years to life in prison and a \$10 million fine if convicted on charges of money laundering and conspiracy to manufacture and distribute marijuana. If the judge accepts the plea bargain, Ebyam is expected to get between six and eight years in prison. Sentencing is set for October 27, 2015.

Ebyam was growing in at least two large warehouses: 2,168 plants in Sutter County and 3,105 plants in Sacramento County. He had partnered with the **Thomas and David Jopson**, known for four generations of hydroponic tomato farming, who rented their greenhouses for the operation. The Jopsons pleaded guilty in February 2014 and [were sentenced to one year each in prison](#) on July 29, 2015 and were ordered to surrender themselves on September 24.

Also, Judge Mendez sentenced **Aimee Sisco**, 34, of Redding, to 38 months in prison after she pleaded guilty to conspiring to cultivate marijuana with the Jopsons and others.

Nathan Hoffman, a Los Angeles lawyer representing marijuana dispensaries and an alleged business partner of Ebyam, still faces trial to face money-laundering and conspiracy charges in connection with an alleged scheme to set up multiple growing operations to supply the medical marijuana market.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#), and [see background.](#)

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- UPDATE - On Oct. 2, 2015, three defendants in the Kettle Falls Five case were sentenced to federal prison terms and fines for cultivating as patients under WA's medical cannabis program. Despite a Congressional restriction on cannabis prosecutions, the DOJ has committed hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to prosecuting and jailing these patients. ASA is asking for immediate orders of commutation and remission of jail time and fines for Rolland Gregg, his wife Michelle Gregg, and his mother Rhonda Firestack-Harvey. **Please visit: [Pardon the Kettle Falls Five](#)**

UPDATE July 2015 - Jason Zucker, the only member who pleaded guilty to the charges (and gave evidence against the others) was sentenced to 16 months, but will remain free pending an appeal.

March 2015 - The jury acquitted the three remaining defendants of all but one charge of manufacturing less than 100 marijuana plants. The charge carries no mandatory minimum sentence and defendants **Rhonda Firestack-Harvey**, 56, her son **Rolland Gregg**, 33, and daughter-in-law **Michelle Gregg**, 36, remain free until sentencing. Before the trial even began, the federal government agreed to dismiss charges against Larry Harvey, 71, a co-defendant who was recently diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer, but the DOJ fought against the dismissal of charges against the remaining defendants. Co-defendant and family friend **Jason Zucker**, 39, took a plea deal one day before trial began and agreed to testify for the government against the three remaining defendants in exchange for a felony conspiracy conviction and a recommended sentence of 16 months.

May 2014 - **Larry Harvey**, a 70-year-old medical marijuana patient with no criminal history, three of his relatives and a family friend each face mandatory minimum sentences of at least 10 years in prison after they were caught growing 68 pot plants on their rural, mountainous property in Washington state. The "[Kettle Falls 5](#)" cooperative was raided in August 2012. [Read more.](#) (Pictured left: co-defendants Rolland and Michelle Gregg).

See the Kettle Falls Five [website](#) and [Facebook page](#). [Donate here.](#)

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- November 21, 2013 - Federal authorities raided more than a dozen marijuana facilities in the Denver metro area, including grow operations north of Boulder and a dispensary in Nederland, as part of an ongoing criminal investigation. [Read more.](#)

The rationale for the federal raids in Colorado remains unexplained. If this action was intended to exemplify "tight regulation," it would have been helpful if the feds had at least explained what particular offense they were aiming to punish. In most regulatory systems, offenders receive an official visit by inspectors, who cite them for specific violations that are typically punished by civil fines or license suspensions. In this case, the feds sent in the usual gang of DEA pirates on criminal search warrants, plundering the victims but refusing to comment on the case. An unenlightening way to enforce federal "law", whatever that may be. Another example of the out-of-control federal misgovernment that we have sadly come to expect from Washington, DC.

- October 9, 2013 - SocalPURE was raided by the Vista Sheriff's Department, ATF, DEA, Homeland Security, the Narcotics Task Force, and the Gang Task Force. Medicine and cash were taken by the heavily-armed force, who handcuffed occupants for over 3 hours.
- UPDATE October 8, 2013 - [The forfeiture case against Jalali has been dropped.](#) along with forfeiture proceedings against three other landlords: Dr. Mark Burcaw, who owns two properties in Santa Ana, including one that currently houses a dispensary, as well as Tom Woo and finally, Walter and Diane Botsch, who stood to lose a property that had been renting to a dispensary in the Eagle Rock neighborhood of Los Angeles.

August 26, 2013 - Landlord Tony Jalali had no connection to the Releaf Health and Wellness dispensary in Anaheim, and evicted the tenants just days after the property forfeiture case was filed last year, said his attorney, Larry Salzman of the Institute for Justice. U.S. District Judge Andrew Guilford urged both sides to hammer out a settlement.

Federal prosecutors previously offered a deal that would allow Jalali to keep the property, as long as he agrees not to lease any space to medical marijuana dispensaries for the next four years. His attorneys rejected the offer due to "unacceptable provisions," including random inspections of the building. Under the so-called "equitable sharing" program, Anaheim would collect 80 percent of the proceeds after the building is sold, while the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration would take 20 percent, Salzman said. Jalali would receive nothing. [Read more.](#)

Another Anaheim building the feds have moved to forfeit belongs to a computer engineer and his dentist wife who now stand to lose their \$1.5 million retirement investment property over a \$37 pot sale. Thanks to a lawsuit filed by that couple, a wealth of emails has surfaced that detail the feds' quest to rid Anaheim of marijuana dispensaries. Attorney Matthew Pappas alleges the government went for "shock value" in its tactics. [Read more.](#)

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- July 13, 2013 - A federal grand jury returned a multi-count indictment charging **John Wesley Lane**, 33, and **Kelsey Ann Lane**, 26, both of Anderson, with manufacturing and distributing marijuana, according to a press release issued by the office of US Attorney Benjamin Wagner.

According to court documents, law enforcement agents executed federal search warrants Dec. 13, 2012 at three properties owned, leased, or associated with the Lanes, including a warehouse on Eastside Road in Anderson; the Lanes' residence on Nicole Court in Anderson and the California Patients Collective marijuana dispensary on Churn Creek Road in Redding.

They discovered 2,700 mature marijuana plants and 1,300 marijuana clones and about 40 kilograms of processed marijuana from the warehouse. At the Lanes' residence they found about 130 pounds of processed marijuana, numerous firearms and \$51,860.87 in cash. Nearly 200 marijuana plants, processed marijuana, concentrated cannabis, edible marijuana and \$4,673.00 in cash were found at the dispensary in Redding.

The couple made an initial appearance in court on June 14 and were scheduled for arraignment on July 12. Both defendants face maximum statutory penalties of up to life in prison and statutory mandatory minimum sentences of 10 years in prison.

[Read more.](#)

- June 11, 2013 - **Jerry Duval**, a Michigan farmer who has a kidney and pancreas transplant, as well as glaucoma and neuropathy, surrendered for a 10-year prison sentence after police, who had approved his 144-plant cooperative garden, raided it and moved to forfeit his property. Duval's prison term could cost taxpayers [an estimated \\$1.2 million](#). His son **Jeremy Duval** is serving a 5-year sentence. [Sign a petition for compassionate release for Duval.](#)

Meanwhile, federal authorities moved to shut down marijuana dispensaries in Echo Park, Westlake, south L.A., the harbor area, Long Beach, Lancaster and Pearblossom. The action so far involves mainly warning letters to most of the 103 storefronts targeted, according to a statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles. The targeted 71 dispensaries in the city of L.A. involved all remaining known shops in the LAPD's Rampart, Newton and Harbor divisions, feds said. [Source.](#)

Facing immediate asset forfeiture are two Long Beach dispensaries: The Healing Tree Holistic Association at 3721 East Anaheim Street, and the Naples Wellness Center at 5750 East Second Street.

- May 8, 2013 [Cal NORML Denounces Federal Forfeiture Suit Against East Bay's Oldest Medical Cannabis Dispensary: BPG](#)
The U.S. Dept of Justice filed a property forfeiture lawsuit against the landlord of the East

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Bay's oldest operating medical cannabis dispensary, the Berkeley Patient's Group. Founded in 1999, the BPG is one of the most respected dispensaries in the Bay Area.

- May 7, 2013 - Seven Michigan defendants, including two who are in their 60s, pleaded guilty to federal marijuana charges over an operation that leased grow rooms to six medical marijuana caregivers.

Dennis Forsberg, 59, of Forsberg Real Estate Co., was sentenced to three years in federal prison and ordered to pay a \$15,000 fine. His son, 32-year-old **Lance Forsberg**, also was sentenced last month to three years in prison.

Ryan Basore, 36, who in a proposal for investors estimated the annual return at a half-million dollars, received the most severe penalty — four years in prison. **Patrick Karlake**, 64, also admitted playing a role. He is serving a one-year prison sentence and was ordered to pay a \$15,000 fine. The others convicted were: **Kyle Corey**, 23 his father, **Dennis Corey**, 65 and **Douglas Frakes**, 58. Dennis was sentenced to one year in prison, and was sentenced to two years. Frakes was sentenced to one day in prison. [Source](#).

- May 2, 2013 - [US Drug Nannies Send More Dispensary Landlord Letters](#)
US Attorney Melinda Haag has issued a spate of new landlord letters targeting medical cannabis dispensaries in Northern California.

In addition, [The DEA sent cease-and-desist letters to 11 medical-marijuana dispensaries in Seattle](#). "Despite the sequester, Newtown, and the Boston bombing, the Obama administration still insists in meddling in medical marijuana issues that properly belong to local authorities," said Dale Gieringer of California NORML.

- On April 18, 2013, [federal prosecutors moved against 63 dispensaries in Santa Ana](#). Prosecutors filed three asset forfeiture lawsuits against properties where seven dispensaries are operating and raided two of the stores involved.

Forfeiture actions were brought against:

- **GLC (or the Green Love Collective and The Dispensary Store**, which are operating in a building at 1638 East 17th Street, a property owned by chiropractor Mark Burcaw, and previously have been the subject of administrative citations issued by the city;
 - **SoCal Compassion, Club Meds and Well Greenz**, at 1651 East Edinger, another building owned by Burcaw; and
 - **J Pacific Life and Healing OC**, 1665 East 4th Street, where the raids took place.
- UPDATE 10/8/2013: Forfeiture cases against Burcaw [were expected to be dismissed](#).

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Also, prosecutors sent threatening letters to people associated with 56 other dispensaries. That is every known dispensary in the city. The Santa Ana Police and Santa Ana City Attorney's Office cooperated with the feds.

On April 23, the DEA and a local drug task force raided the last dispensary in San Diego and nine associated grow sites. Raided was the **One on One Patients Association**, whose director, Ken Cole, had testified the previous night at the city council's hearing on the mayor's proposed dispensary ordinance. No arrests were made, but marijuana and other items were seized. Cole is also the director of the area dispensary industry group, the United Patients Alliance. [Source](#).

- March 28, 2013 - **John Lester Gross III** pleaded guilty to maintaining a drug-involved premises in federal court. According to court documents, Gross helped organize and maintain a marijuana dispensary on P Street in Sacramento. The dispensary was supplied with marijuana grown on Gross's property in Rough and Ready, which is near Grass Valley. On the property, officers found more than 2,800 marijuana plants and approximately 100 pounds of processed marijuana.

Gross is scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge Morrison C. England Jr. on June 27, 2013. Gross faces a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine.

- January 13, 2013 - **Matthew R. Davies**, 34 of Stockton (shown above with his family) was handed a five year mandatory minimum sentence on December 13, 2013. According to [the New York Times](#), federal agents raided two of Mr. Davies's dispensaries and a warehouse, where 2,000 marijuana plants were grown, in 2011. The federal authorities said they stumbled across the operation after two men were spotted apparently breaking into Mr. Davies's 30,000-square-foot Stockton warehouse. The police said they smelled marijuana plants. Federal agents conducted a raid and confiscated 1,962 plants and 200 pounds of marijuana.

Lynn Farrell Smith, 62, of Stockton [pleaded guilty in a Sacramento federal court](#) to manufacturing and distribution charges that can send him to federal prison for five years. He was a partner in the venture that included a Stockton marijuana cultivation warehouse and seven dispensaries, including four in Sacramento. Smith was scheduled for sentencing in mid-December 2013 and was expected to get 4 years. A third defendant, **Robert Duncan**, has been sentenced to two years in prison.

Also see [The Atlantic story on Davies's bust](#), and supporters' website [KeepMattFree.com](#)

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MATTHEW ROWAN DAVIES 69005-097
TAFT CI
1500 CADET ROAD
TAFT, CA 93268
Release Date: 08/09/2018

[Robert Duncan: I'm Going to Prison for Working at a Pot Shop that was Legal in My State](#) and the [Free Robert Duncan](#) Facebook page.

- January 9, 2013 - Former South Lake Tahoe medical marijuana dispensary operator **Gino DiMatteo** pleaded guilty to a single count of possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, as part of a plea agreement. On August 31, 2012, US agents say they found 5 pounds of processed marijuana and 15 pounds of "shake," at DeMatteo's home. Also found were various edible marijuana products, a scale, pay/owe sheets and a heat sealing machine. DiMatteo listed himself as receiving \$7,000 biweekly in one of the documents found. He is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Kimberly J. Mueller on April 17. The maximum penalty for possession with the intent to distribute marijuana is 30 years in prison. [Source.](#)



- On May 19, 2011 **Patricia Albright** and her 26-year-old son **Jordan Wirtz** of Nevada City (pictured above) were indicted by the federal government for growing 89 plants for 10 patients on Albright's property, which is now the object of a forfeiture action. Albright is facing a prison sentence of 7 1/2 years and Jordan 6 1/2 years. They were scheduled to go to trial on February 3, 2014, but after Sacramento NORML Women's Alliance and The Human Solution helped arrange an interview on Fox 40 TV news, it was delayed until July 28, 2014.

Albright's oldest son Trevor (pictured right) was diagnosed at age 15 months with bi-lateral retinoblastoma (eye cancer). After losing both of his eyes, he developed bone cancer at the age of 8. Medical marijuana, recommended by his doctor, was a great relief in the days before he died. Understandably diagnosed with anxiety, depression and hypervigilance, Albright has a recommendation for medical marijuana, as does Jordan, who has had a



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dozen broken bones, with steel pins inserted into his humerus to hold his arm together.

On September 18, 2014, Wirtz pleaded guilty to federal firearms charges. On February 26, 2015, Judge Troy L. Nunley sentenced Wirtz to five years in prison, United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced. [Read more.](#)

Albright pleaded guilty in July 2015 to conspiring to manufacture marijuana, manufacturing marijuana, and structuring currency transactions to evade federal reporting requirements. She faces a sentence of five years and five months in prison at a hearing before Nunley on December 3, 2015.

Read a letter Albright wrote to President Obama about her case [here](#) and [here](#).

Albright is looking for donations for her legal defense. Send to: Patricia Albright 5758 Sutton Way #308 Grass Valley, CA 95945.

JORDAN ROBERT WIRTZ #66095-097
Lompoc FCI
3600 GUARD ROAD
LOMPOC, CA 93436
Release Date: 03/22/2018

- December 11, 2012 - **Bryan Smith**, 28, of Elk Grove, pleaded guilty to federal drug charges stemming from owning and operating the R & R Wellness marijuana dispensary formerly located at 75 Quita Court in Sacramento and growing marijuana related to the dispensary operation. On May 25, 2013 he was sentenced to 6 years. See: [Files on cooperating federal defendants often sealed, Sacramento case shows](#)

Smith is the last defendant to plead guilty in the case. Co-defendants **Daniel Goldsmith**, 27, Galt- Elk Grove; **Robert Klaus**, 36, San Diego; **Ryder Phillips**, 27, Galt; **Kelly Smith**, 55, Elk Grove and **Bruce Goldsmith**, 61.

All are pending sentencing. [Read more.](#)

- October 25, 2012 - The U.S. Attorney's Office announced the arrests of 12 people associated with a chain of pot shops in Southern California.

John Melvin Walker allegedly operated 9 dispensaries in L.A. and Orange counties; he's been charged with failure to report taxable income, conspiracy to distribute marijuana and maintaining a drug location near schools. The suspect, who had previously been convicted of cocaine and pot charges, was also allegedly in possession of an AK-47 and shotgun.

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Defendants, according to the feds, include:

- John Melvin Walker, also known as "Pops," 56, of San Clemente, the owner/operator of the nine marijuana stores;
- Ryan Aparicio Mondragon**, 30, Westminster, who managed Santa Ana Superior Care;
- Danielle Pamela Stebel**, also known as "Mob Queen," 25, of Long Beach, who helped manage Belmont Shore Natural Care;
- Nicholas Einar Lattu**, also known as "Dragon 6," 28, of Long Beach, who owned Shadow Ops Security, a company that provided security services to the marijuana stores, and who is currently being sought by authorities;
- Ryan Scott Hunt**, 36, of Fullerton, who managed Garden Grove Alternative Care;
- Perry Brooks Forehand**, also known as "Bucky," 33, of Mission Viejo, the manager of Safe Harbor Collective;
- Nicholas Martin Butier III**, 32, of Lakewood, who was the manager of Alternative Herbal Health;
- Sierra Marina Serhan**, also known as "Happy Chick," 33, of Long Beach, who helped manage Belmont Shore Natural Care;
- Alvin Wesley Walker**, 29, of Long Beach, who is believed to be John Walker's nephew and who helped manage Belmont Shore Natural Care;
- John Eugene Scandalios**, 59, of Lakewood, who allegedly supplied marijuana to Santa Fe Compassionate Health Care;
- Karen Lee Leto**, 70, of Huntington Beach, who allegedly helped manage Costa Mesa Patients Association;
- Craig Lawrence Leto**, 49, of Newport Beach who is Karen Leto's son and who allegedly helped manage Costa Mesa Patients Association;
- Michael Alan Nixon**, 33, of Long Beach, who allegedly supplied marijuana to Santa Fe Compassionate Health Care;
- Alan David Nixon**, 59, of Long Beach, who is Michael Nixon's father and who allegedly managed Santa Fe Compassionate Health Care.

All of the above are charged with conspiracy. They were arraigned on 10/26 in Orange County.

Source.

UPDATE 4/1/13: Walker pleaded guilty to two felony counts: conspiracy to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana and tax evasion. He must forfeit more than \$25 million in assets, cash and business interests — including his Tuscan manor high above the Pacific in San Clemente, two homes in Long Beach and four mobile homes in Mammoth — and possibly pay \$4.3 million in tax restitution. On July 22, 2013 [Walker was sentenced to 21 years and 10 months in prison.](#) UPDATE 9/27/13: Ryan Mondragon was released and is on home arrest. Karen Leto was never charged and her son Craig has now been released. UPDATE 12/14 - Attorney **Richard C. Brizendine** pleaded guilty to money laundering charges in the case and

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is facing a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years. He is scheduled to be sentenced on May 4, 2015. [Read more.](#)

- October 19, 2012 - **Raymond Arthur Gentile**, 51, and **Gustavo Angel Salinas**, 24, are accused of various crimes related to marijuana cultivation and distribution for involvement with ANP Collective in Bakersfield. Gentile, who was arrested in San Bernardino County after a high-speed chase with California Highway Patrol officers, also faces a federal firearm charge. The case began after a customer accused them of assault with a baseball bat and a Glock handgun after he allegedly stole one gram of marijuana during a purchase. Agents seized 170 marijuana plants, 25 pounds of processed marijuana, nearly 3,000 pills, a 12-gauge shotgun and more than \$68,000 in cash. Gentile and Salinas each face a maximum of 40 years in prison and millions of dollars in fines, the U.S. Attorney's office said. [Read more.](#)
UPDATE 6/17: Gentile was sentenced to five years in prison. [Read more.](#)
- October 11, 2012 - [OAKLAND SUES FEDS WHILE LONG BEACH RAIDS 7 DISPENSARIES](#)
In contrasting moves, the city of Oakland has sued the federal government to stop its forfeiture actions against city-regulated dispensaries, while Long Beach has joined the feds to arrest 40 dispensary workers and is threatening to arrest more.
- September 27, 2012 - 150 agents from US Homeland Security (!), FBI, DEA, CHP and Sonoma sheriff's deputies wearing military garb and were accompanied by an armored military vehicle stormed from house to house, pulling up backyard gardens, in an impoverished section of Santa Rosa. [Read more.](#)

On September 25, Drug Enforcement Administration agents [raided the Live Love Collective in Anaheim.](#)

Meanwhile, five medical marijuana patients and caregivers from Michigan will be sentenced in federal court next week. [Read more.](#)

- September 25 - Federal authorities took legal action against 71 medical marijuana dispensaries in Los Angeles County, including all known collectives in downtown and Eagle Rock part of an ongoing campaign to crack down on medical marijuana.

According to the U.S. attorney's office, officials sent warning letters to 68 pot dispensaries, filed forfeiture lawsuits against three properties that house such businesses and served search warrants at three additional facilities. [Read more.](#)

- 7/17/2012 - Federal agents raided a medical marijuana dispensary in unincorporated Lake Elsinore, for the second time in three months. Drug Enforcement Agency agents seized

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marijuana from Compassionate Patients Association, in the 17500 block of Grand Avenue, and told them to shut down. No arrests were made.

- 7/16/2012 - **Mark Bagdasarian**, the Clovis pot dispensary owner who already is facing marijuana possession and distribution allegations, [is now being hit with federal money laundering charges](#), even as HSBC bank apologizes to a Senate committee for laundering billions in Mexican cartel drug assets (but faces no criminal charges).
- 7/12/2012 - The federal government filed property forfeiture suits aimed at closing Harborside, the foremost medical cannabis dispensary still operating in Northern California. In addition to its flagship Oakland location, Harborside operates a branch in San Jose. The landlords of both received forfeiture notices from the DOJ. [Read more.](#)
- 7/11/2012 - A federal search warrant was served at the Pacific Collective in Venice; the facility is now closed.

The federal government has sent a letter to the landlord for Golden State Patient Care Collective in Colfax, threatening him with forfeiture and criminal charges. "Once again, the DOJ is violating AG Holder's own supposed policy by targeting not rogue criminal profiteers, but a well-run, respected dispensary that is abiding in full accordance with California law," said Dale Gieringer of CalNORML. "The DOJ's real agenda is to try to destroy the most successful leaders in the medical cannabis industry because they prove that lawful access to cannabis works, contrary to the government's bankrupt policy of prohibition."

In June, federal authorities filed two asset forfeiture lawsuits against properties housing three pot shops in Santa Fe Springs and sent warning letters to 34 people associated with allegedly illegal marijuana operations in Los Angeles County. The warning letters targeted known marijuana stores in Santa Fe Springs, Whittier, South El Monte, La Mirada, Diamond Bar, Artesia, Paramount, South Gate, City of Commerce, Agoura Hills and Malibu.

- May 31, 2012 - A federal grand jury returned an eight-count indictment charging 32 people with conspiracy to grow marijuana, U.S. Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced. If convicted, the defendants could face the statutory penalty of 10 years to life in prison.

After opening an investigation into the marijuana grow operation early last year, the Drug Enforcement Administration arrested 26 people associated with the activities on May 16 and 17 and sought to arrest 6 others. Law enforcement agents say they seized more than \$1 million worth of marijuana -- including thousands of marijuana plants from at least 14 indoor grow operations and dozens of pounds of processed cannabis -- as well as dozens of firearms and at least \$400,000.

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Those implicated are between the ages of 20 and 57 from Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno and Stanislaus counties in what the DEA dubbed "Operation Disco Dazed."

According to the DEA, the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint states Steven Ortega Sr., 50, and Marla Ortega, 57, both of Byron, own both retail stores. Agents determined that Steven Ortega Sr. and his 25-year-old son, Steven Ortega Jr., of Discovery Bay, allegedly directed a drug trafficking organization that used the stores to provide growing equipment to partners in exchange for a cut of profits from the marijuana sold.

Also charged in the indictment were:

Richard Serrell, 44, of Antioch;
Marcus Williams, 28, of Hayward;
Kevin Kuester, 43, of Fremont;
Steven Adgate, 30, of Rio Vista;
Jake Westerman, 22, of Livermore;
Nickolas Perry, 23, Joey Figlia, 23, and Kevin Kirkpatrick, 27, of Discovery Bay;
Reginald Bell, 38, of Union City;
Dusty Burge, 39, Matt Ortega, 21, Jay Dupee, 50, and Bryan Swiers, 31, all of Byron;
Anthony Giarrusso, 24, Brock Enrico, 25, and Kyle Schmidt, 25, all of Oakley;
Todd Becerra, 38, and Joseph Mirante, 40, of Tracy;
Charles Erickson, 36, and Travis Olibas, 23, of Fresno;
Richard Reynolds, 34, of Modesto;
Justin McMillian, 32, of Salida;
Shawn Thompson, 43, of Mountain House;
Frederick Laurens, 29, and Michael Kelley, 20, of Brentwood;
and Derek Winters, 30, Robert Kennedy, 25, Nicholas Ojeda, 32, and Jason Siegfried, 28, of Patterson.

We are told Mr. Erickson was a manager at the EarthSource dispensary in Fresno. He was sentenced to 30 mos. and is scheduled for release on 10/25/17.

[Read more.](#)

- 5/4/2012 - The DEA, along with the U.S. Attorney's Office, IRS and Santa Barbara police, served search warrants at several collectives and gardens in Santa Barbara county, and filed three forfeiture proceedings in court. "All known marijuana stores in Santa Barbara County are now the subject of federal enforcement actions," said to a statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the asset-forfeiture lawsuits were filed against Miramar Collective on Ortega Hill Road in Summerland, Pacific Coast Collective, at 331 N.

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Milpas St. in Santa Barbara, whose operator is currently being prosecuted in state court, and an indoor marijuana farm in the 300 block of East Haley Street in Santa Barbara.

Warrants were also served Wednesday at Pacific Coast Collective, and the residence of operator Charles Jeff Restivo in Carpinteria, who is already facing felony charges related to the dispensary. [Read more.](#)

- 4/25/2012 - Federal prosecutors filed forfeiture actions on April 23 against The Green Door Wellness Center and the Green Tiger Collective, both in Novato. The Green Tiger has closed, but the Green Door is fighting to stay open. [Read more.](#)
- 2/29/2012 - US attorneys [have sent landlord letters to over 50 more dispensaries in the Inland Empire area](#) (San Bernardino, Fontana, Colton and Bloomington), where local officials have been pressing to close them. In addition, Cal NORML has learned of new landlord letters in Mendocino, apparently targeted at facilities within 1,000 feet of schools or playgrounds.

On February 28, Benjamin Wagner, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California, vowed a new crackdown on large medical marijuana grows. In an appearance at the Sacramento Press club, Wagner said in the coming months a new focus will be made on pot farms with tens of thousands of plants in the central valley, from Stanislaus County down to Kern County," Wagner said. When asked if he'd ever smoked marijuana himself, [Wagner replied, "I'll say I went to college."](#)

That day, U.S. District Judge Garland E. Burrell Jr. dismissed one of five suits that had been filed in federal courts last fall in a bid to win legal support for medical marijuana use in California and other states. [Burrell's order](#) came in a suit filed in federal court in Sacramento last November on behalf of the El Camino Wellness Center and Ryan Landers, a 40-year-old Sacramento man who uses medical marijuana to alleviate suffering from AIDS and other illnesses.

- February 21, 2012 - **Matthew Shotwell**, operator and founder of Greenwell Cooperative in Vallejo was arrested by Vallejo Police and taken into custody. Almost 800 plants were seized from the different locations, police said. The U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of California is also investigating a potential civil action against the building's owner, Vallejo Police Lt. Ken Weaver said. Other collectives in Vallejo were reportedly raided on the same day. UPDATE 3/20/2013 - [Charges against Shotwell were dismissed](#) for lack of evidence of a crime, as they were against all five of the Vallejo dispensaries
- January 25, 2012 - Federal agents seized more than 2,500 marijuana plants and arrested at least six people in connection with alleged marijuana grows in an industrial complex just outside Murrieta city limits. On Jan. 18, there were 1,827 marijuana plants seized from the Disabled American Veteran's Collective (DAVC), in the same complex. Two people were

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arrested in that raid: **Kevin Freeman**, 38, of Temecula, the director of the collective, and **Dennis Earl Zuniga**, 32. Prior to the raids, DAVC was visited twice in December by an undercover Riverside County Sheriff's detective who had obtained a medical marijuana card and was able to purchase marijuana twice at the dispensary, according to the warrant. The building's owner **Jonathan Cringan**, according to the warrant, who was among four arrested. [Read more.](#)

- UPDATE 9/10/12 - Christopher Cronshaw, 25, was sentenced to 125 days in prison and three months home arrest and Gregory Zuckert to three days in prison and three months home arrest. Prosecutors say the 25-year-old Cronshaw was the head grower at Washington's greenhouse.
- January 18, 2012 - As part of a continuing, coordinated effort against commercial marijuana operations in California that started last fall, federal prosecutors have filed four asset forfeiture lawsuits against properties housing marijuana storefronts in Los Angeles and Orange counties and have sent warning letters to property owners and operators of illegal marijuana stores in several Southland cities.

The forfeiture actions include **American Collective, Otherside Farms, and three other marijuana stores operating at 440 Fair Drive in Costa Mesa**. All known collectives in Costa Mesa and Newport Beach are now the subject of federal enforcement actions.

Another asset forfeiture lawsuit has been filed against the building that houses the **Alternative Medicinal Cannabis Collective (AMCC)** in an unincorporated part of Covina.

Warning letters were sent last week to property owners and operators associated with marijuana stores in unincorporated Walnut, La Puente, Murrieta and Lake Elsinore, where a total of 17 stores are believed to be currently operating. Those receiving letters were warned that the stores are operating in violation of federal law and that they have 15 days to take steps to discontinue the sale and distribution of marijuana at the stores.

Three civil forfeiture actions filed in October are still pending, but the stores in the properties have been closed. And dozens of letters sent to those associated with marijuana stores in 13 Southland cities have resulted in nearly all of the stores being closed, with the remainder currently being the subject of eviction proceedings.

[Read more.](#)

- January 12, 2012 - United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced the filing of a civil forfeiture complaint against **Grass, aka Sacramento Holistic Healing Center**. According to

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the complaint, Grass/SHHC is located less than 1,000 feet from an elementary school and a high school. [Read more.](#)

And federal agents raided three pot dispensaries in San Diego acting on a "landlord law" that was put into action by the U.S. Attorney's office last year. Agents targeted **Golden West Collective** on University Avenue in North Park with assistance from San Diego Police. [Read more.](#)

Cal NORML has received word that in Sacramento County, a score of dispensaries have closed voluntarily in response to the landlord letters. Also, in the Northern District several well-regarded dispensaries have been targeted on the spurious grounds that they were within 1,000 feet of playgrounds or parks, including the **Humboldt Medical Supply** in Arcata.

- October 14, 2011 - Federal prosecutors are warning 16 Sacramento-area landlords they could lose their buildings for renting to marijuana dispensaries. United States Attorney Ben Wagner is following through on a threat formally announced at a news conference last Friday, and confirmed the number of landlord letters in an interview Thursday on Capital Public Radio.
- October 13, 2011 - DEA agents along with BNE and one Mendocino county sheriff deputy raided the garden of **Northstone Organics**, one of the county-licensed medical marijuana growers. Northstone has been involved in a court case in Sonoma county after two of their drivers were caught there while transporting marijuana to medical patients in the Bay area. A Mendocino sheriff and county supervisor testified on behalf of Northstone in that trial.

Also on this day, United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced that a federal grand jury returned a four-count indictment **Mark Bagdasarian** and his son **Ryan Bagdasarian** with conspiring to cultivate and distribute marijuana and possessing marijuana through their Buds 4 Life dispensaries in Fresno. According to the criminal complaint, in June 2011, the Bagdasarian's stores were searched and law enforcement officers found 3,669 marijuana plants, 219 pounds of processed marijuana, and more than \$546,000 in cash. A more recent search yielded another 35 pounds of processed marijuana and \$40,000 in cash.

- October 12, 2011 - DEA agents, assisted by Pomona police officers, raided the **Green Cross USA** dispensary, seizing marijuana, edibles, hashish, hashish oil and some documents as part of an investigation. The property owner had received a letter from DEA threatening civil and criminal charges; local authorities had also moved to close the shop. No arrests have been made.
- October 5, 2011 - In conjunction with [a new federal assault on California's medical marijuana providers](#), a criminal case was unsealed naming six defendants linked to a now-defunct North Hollywood marijuana collective called **NoHo Caregivers**. The organization allegedly sold marijuana to other stores, and sent marijuana to affiliates in New York and Pennsylvania -

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distributed approximately 600 to 700 pounds of marijuana per month, according to the indictment. The indictment also seeks the forfeiture of \$14.7 million. The defendants named in the NoHo Caregivers indictment are **Paul A. Montoya, Noah Joel Kleinman, Kathy Thabet, James Stanley, Bryant Watson, and Casey Wheat.** Their trial is set for May 22, 2012.

Prosecutors also filed three forfeiture actions against owners of buildings where **The Wildomar Patients Compassionate Group, Montclair Caregivers** in San Bernardino County, and eight stores located in a two-story strip mall at 26402 Raymond Way in **Lake Forest.**

Federal authorities arrested **Ronnie Chang**, 43, of the Wildomar collective; Amanda Theresa Ventura, 28; **Peter Arthur S.**, 54; **Hal Delno Pilotte**, 57; and **Gary David Maddox**, 55. A sixth defendant, James Travis Brand, 28, was extradited from Texas and also charged. Pilotte had a hearing in San Diego on January 10, 2012, where the judge granted the defense team time to investigate a wiretap order.

- UPDATE: On July 14, 2013 charges were dropped against Maddox, who was landlord for the collective. According to a report from Terri Best of San Diego Americans for Safe Access, Maddox's office was raided in 2011 along with Ronnie's collective, but no arrests were made. "But a few weeks later as he and his wife were breakfasting, the DEA with guns drawn descended on his home, terrifying his wife, forced him to the ground and took him away in handcuffs. Later that day, Gary found himself taken to a downtown facility and there he saw Ronnie Chang and other defendants all charged with conspiracy, including [Hal Pilotte](#) whose charges were also dropped a few months ago under the negotiations of his attorney Bahar Ansari." Maddox refused the prosecution's "deal" which would have involved forfeiture of his property. "U.S. Prosecutor Starita called Mark Bluemel's office with the news that charges against his client had also been dropped. Gary was in court for the last time on July 1st, 2013 and walked out a free man."

On October 17, 2013 Ron Chang accepted a plea deal and was released after 18 months in prison. Once facing 77 charges, he pleaded guilty only to money laundering and no drug charges. "The absence of drug charges in the plea agreement suggests a new realignment with Justice Department guidelines that give states more leeway to impose their own strict marijuana laws" wrote [The San Diego Union Tribune](#)

On March 17, 2014, [Chang was sentenced to time served.](#)

In addition to the criminal case and the forfeiture actions, the United States Attorney's Office sent dozens of letters to people affiliated with 38 marijuana dispensaries in selected cities across the Southland. Those receiving letters are warned that the stores are operating in violation of federal law and that they have two weeks to "take the necessary steps to

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discontinue the sale and/or distribution of marijuana" at the stores. The letters note that the operation of a marijuana store "may result in criminal prosecution, imprisonment, fines, and forfeiture of assets, including the real property on which the dispensary is operating and any money you receive (or have received) from the dispensary operator."

The cities are:

- Orange County - the cities of **Lake Forest, Dana Point, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel,** and **Rancho Santa Margarita;**
- Riverside County - the cities of **Murrieta, Wildomar,** and **Temecula;** and
- Inland Empire - the cities of **Pomona, Claremont, Upland, Montclair,** and **Chino.**

Also receiving a letter was the building owner of the state's longest-operating dispensary, the **Marin Alliance for Medical Marijuana** in Fairfax. It warns the landlord that he could be liable for imprisonment of up to 40 years, forfeiture of the property, and forfeiture of all rental proceeds from the last 15 years for violating federal law if MAMM isn't evicted.

Building owners for three dispensaries in San Francisco also received letters, as did the **Ocean Beach Wellness Centers** and **Oasis Herbal Center** in San Diego. In recent weeks, federal authorities seized the bank accounts of two dispensaries in Sacramento and announced a \$2.4 million tax penalty against **Harborside Health Center** in Oakland.

- July 20, 2011 - **Jerry Laberde, Dennis Whited, Russell Blake, Charles Wright** and **Jon Vivian** have been indicted on federal charges that arose from a crackdown on medical marijuana dispensaries in Spokane, Washington earlier this year. The charges carry maximum penalties of 20 years in prison and fines up to \$250,000.
- July 13, 2011 - Ten people have pleaded not guilty to various federal charges of drug-trafficking conspiracy after approximately 30 law enforcement agencies executed 26 criminal search warrants in 13 Montana cities on March 14. **Jason D. Burns, Joshua L. Schultz** and **Jesse D. Leland** pleaded not guilty on June 23 to manufacturing, distribution, possession, and money laundering charges in U.S. District Court in Missoula. On June 30, **Richard G. Flor, Justin L. Flor** and **Sherry L. Flor** were each charged with 11 felonies, including possession of a firearm during a drug-trafficking offense in U.S. District Court in Billings. On July 6, **Jonathan Janetski, Michael Kassner, Tyler Roe** and **Evan Corum** were charged with three counts each in Missoula. An eleventh person is yet to be arrested, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Jessica Fehr. All of the defendants face a mandatory minimum of five years, and up to 40 years in prison if convicted. The weapons charges against the Flor's could lead to life imprisonment. Operators of the Montana Caregivers Association and MCM

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Caregivers, which were among the targets of the raids, have filed a lawsuit in federal court claiming their constitutional rights were violated.

UPDATE: On Sept. 7, 2011, Schultz pleaded guilty on Sept. 7 to a charge of distributing more than 100 kilograms of marijuana. He agreed to forfeit at least \$600,000 in cash and a Mercedes car, according to court documents. Leland pleaded guilty on Sept. 13. Both men are scheduled to be sentenced in December. Burns has a hearing scheduled for Sept. 15 on whether he can introduce evidence of Montana's medical marijuana law and entrapment during his trial. Four other men have pleaded guilty in federal court in Missoula in separate cases related to the March dispensary raids.

Separate from the March raids, **Shawn Slattery** and **Andrew Umhey** pleaded guilty to conspiracy to manufacture marijuana, according to a statement from the U.S. Attorney. Prosecutors alleged that from October 2010 to February 2011, Slattery and Umhey operated the Four-Twenty Ranch LLC, where marijuana was produced and stored. In February, law enforcement officers seized 272 marijuana plants and 32.5 pounds of marijuana from the business. Both face a mandatory minimum of five years in prison. They are scheduled to be sentenced on December 22. (Source: [Medical Marijuana Business Report](#))

UPDATE 3/12: Corum was sentenced to six months in prison, plus six months of house arrest. Kassner and Roe were sentenced to a year and a day each in prison.

UPDATE: On May 22, 2012, [Janetski was sentenced to a year in prison](#), and will likely serve about 10 months. This will make him the first landlord to do time in a medical marijuana case. [Read more.](#)

UPDATE 8/29: Chris Lindsey, the president of an advocacy group behind a lawsuit and a ballot measure challenging Montana's restrictive new medical marijuana law, has struck a deal with federal prosecutors to plead guilty to conspiracy to maintain a drug-involved premises for his involvement with Montana Cannabis. The charge carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine upon conviction. He will appear in court on Sept. 6 along with Daubert.

Montana Cannabis partner Richard Flor was sentenced earlier this year to five years in prison. A fourth partner, Chris Williams, is still fighting the federal charges, as is Dan Nichols, a former Montana Cannabis employee who is known for kidnapping a world-class biathlete in the 1980s with his father in a scheme to make the woman his mountain bride. Williams and Nichols are scheduled to go to trial Sept. 24. [Source.](#)

UPDATE 8/30: [Richard Flor died in Federal custody.](#)

UPDATE 9/6: Tom Daubert, 59, [pleaded guilty](#) and [was sentenced to five years probation](#) on Sept. 6. He faced 20 years for his involvement in Montana Cannabis.

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UPDATE 9/28: Williams [was found guilty on eight charges](#) by a jury on September 27, 2012.

Williams wasn't able to tell the jurors anything about the Montana Medical Marijuana Act since Judge Christensen ruled that marijuana remains a Schedule 1 drug under federal law; as such, possession, cultivation and distribution of it remains a federal crime. Montana laws, he added, weren't pertinent to the case and he didn't allow any mention of them before jurors or as a defense. [This is the case in all federal kangaroo court trials regarding medical marijuana.] Williams's lawyer Michael Donahoe stated that he believes the federal government is guilty of entrapment of his client, and will appeal on that basis and others.

- Also see: [Grim Times for ExPot Providers](#)

Also see: [Federal Medical Marijuana Cases - begun prior to 2012](#)

[Federal Medical Marijuana Cases - resolved](#)

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