

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



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OUR OPINION

*Here's how the group frames the initiative:
"It makes marijuana offenses, where cannabis
is intended for adult personal use, the lowest
police priority" in Santa Barbara.*

'Sensible Santa Barbara'

Perhaps you've seen them at the farmers markets or other community events, gathering signatures as part of a little-known effort to get Santa Barbara to rethink arresting adults who have a small amount of marijuana for personal use.

If the group, known as Sensible Santa Barbara, collects enough signatures, the proposal will be on the November ballot.

Here's how the group frames the initiative:

- "It makes marijuana offenses, where cannabis is intended for adult personal use, the lowest police priority."

- And "it frees up police resources to focus on violent and serious crime, instead of arresting and jailing nonviolent cannabis users."

The News-Press thinks this makes perfect sense. Proponents have patterned the measure after one Seattle residents approved by nearly 60 percent of the vote in 2003. Oakland voters approved a wider-ranging one — it also covers cultivating marijuana — in 2004.

In Santa Cruz, organizers already have turned in petitions to get their version of the measure on the November ballot. Santa Monica voters may have the question before them in November as well if the petition drive succeeds there.

The City Council of West Hollywood, where the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department acts as the local police force, may make such offenses the lowest priority for law enforcement by an edict of the council instead of by the ballot box.

Sensible Santa Barbara's initiative surely will put members of the Santa Bar-

bara City Council — a panel with members who claim the "social progressive" title — on the spot.

Many of Santa Barbara's elected leaders, past and present, wouldn't even support the city taking real action to help sick

and dying people get legal access to medical marijuana.

The measure will be a test of whether the city's self-proclaimed progressive groups actually can live up to the title by joining this cause.

A representative of Sensible Santa Barbara already has collected about 7,000 signatures, with a goal of 10,000 by the end of the month. Below is information on how you can help them reach that total.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

You may reach the group behind the petition drive by e-mail at sensiblesantabarbara@gmail.com or by phone at 698-5822.

The group's Web site is www.sensiblesantabarbara.org.

