



Grass roots

BY **NGAIO BEALUM** / ask420@newsreview.com

Seriously. These taxes at the club are wrecking my weed budget. I want to support the legal industry, but I am not made of money. What can I do?

I'm glad you asked. Get on the phone (or email) and talk to your state legislators about Assembly Bill 1948, which would lower the excise tax and eliminate the cultivation tax. It failed last year, but the bill's co-author Rob Bonta, an Oakland Democrat, reintroduced it this session. This time though, he seems to have garnered more support. Gov. Gavin Newsom's release about the new budget included this tidbit: "The Administration, in consultation with the industry and stakeholders, will consider other changes to the existing cannabis tax structure, including the number of taxes and tax rates to simplify the system and to support a stronger, safer legal cannabis market." It's about time. Thank you, Assemblyman Bonta, Gov. Newsom and State Treasurer Fiona Ma for supporting this common-sense legislation. So, seriously. Call your representatives RIGHT NOW and tell them to pass AB 1948.

Listen: Cannabis is a golden goose. Weed will always make money. More than \$3 billion worth of cannabis and cannabis accessories were sold in California last year. Too bad 75% of that money went to the black, er, traditional market. How can the state make more money and stop unregulated businesses from eating all the cookies? Easy:

1. Increase access. Fresno has finally decided to allow cannabis dispensaries. This is a good first step. There

should be at least as many dispensaries in any given town as there are liquor stores. You heard me. Cannabis dispensaries provide jobs and improve neighborhoods.

2. Lower licensing fees. It shouldn't cost \$1 million to open a weed store. If you want regular people and not shady people with ties to Ukrainian money laundering schemes (looking at you, Sacramento) to open clubs, you have to make it easier and less expensive for them to get involved.

3. Ban the bans. One of the coolest things about Oklahoma's medical cannabis ordinance is that cities and counties can't block it. They have to allow cannabis businesses. We need that in California. If I can't go to a weed store while I'm stuck in Clovis, you bet your sweet bippy I will find someone in the traditional market to sell me an

eighth. The state should pass a law stating that all the towns and cities that voted in favor of Proposition 64 have to allow cannabis businesses. Allowing legislators to keep bans in place even after their constituents have voted in favor of the law subverts the will of the people.

4. Stop trying to create gigantic farms.

Cannabis has been decentralized since forever. Giving precedence to giant companies with money but no concept of the cannabis culture helps no one. We see by the recent closures and bankruptcies of some pretty big businesses that smaller, local companies do better than giant ones. Treat weed stores like microbreweries and you will be better off in the long run. □

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Ngaio Bealum is a Sacramento comedian, activist and marijuana expert. Email him questions at ask420@newsreview.com.



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