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P.R. 065 Marijuana

# Of pot, politics and strange bedfellows in Santa Cruz

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Talk about politics making strange bedfellows:

Advocates of legalizing marijuana for medical purposes told Santa Cruz County supervisors on Tuesday they will join conservative anti-tax activists in the fight against two November ballot measures that would extend the half-cent sales tax earmarked for public safety.

The promise to fight Proposition 172 and county Measure P came after several

‘They (deputies) have taken my only medicine . . . This is not a joke. This is something that keeps me well.’

— Valerie Corral, who says she smokes marijuana to control epileptic seizures\*

speakers angrily blasted the county sheriff's office for its arrest last week of a Davenport woman who smokes marijuana to control epileptic seizures.

The same woman, Valerie Corral, 41, had been arrested last year but District Attorney Art Danner dropped charges

after deciding that a local jury would not convict Corral — who said she had smoked pot to control seizures resulting from head injuries received in a 1973 auto accident.

Corral and her husband, Mike, were arrested again last Tuesday as part of

the annual CAMP — Campaign Against Marijuana Planting — operation. Seven marijuana plants growing in their yard were confiscated.

After the raid it was learned that Danner had, several days earlier, indicated to Sheriff Al Noren's office that un-

doubtedly he again would refuse to prosecute the case. Nonetheless, deputies arrested the couple.

The Corrals were among several speakers who expressed outrage to supervisors over the arrests. Most speakers pointed to Measure A, the medical marijuana advisory referendum on the Santa Cruz County ballot last year. That local referendum passed with support from 77 percent of the voters.

The ballot measures in question this

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# Unlikely alliance vowed in Santa Cruz

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year are Proposition 172 — the statewide proposal to extend the half-cent sales tax to pay for public safety programs such as police and fire departments — and local Measure P.

The local initiative is a backup to Proposition 172. It would, if passed, extend the half-cent public safety sales tax in Santa Cruz County if Proposition 172 fails at polls statewide.

Although no organized opposition has garnered much attention in Santa Cruz County, conservative state Republican leaders have come out against Proposition 172.

Mike Corral, noting that he and his wife face prison sentences if convicted of felonies for growing the marijuana they say she uses for medicinal purposes, complained that sheriff's deputies "treated us like criminals.

"We are not criminals!" he said.

Corral denied that he smokes marijuana.

Pointing to the overwhelming victory of the medical marijuana initiative in Santa Cruz County, Corral pleaded with supervisors to "stand up for what is right. Express your outrage."

Then his wife, who said deputies who searched her home were "bullies," told the board:

"I am not a criminal. I am not a dealer . . .

"They have taken my only medicine . . . This is not a joke. This is something that keeps me well."

She has said that prior to using marijuana to control her seizures she was addicted to legally prescribed drugs, including Valium and phenobarbital.

Then Theodora Kerry, a leading spokeswoman for local efforts to decriminalize marijuana, par-

ticularly for medical purposes, told supervisors she and her colleagues "are going to actively oppose Proposition 172 and Measure P."

Both measures are endorsed by Danner and Noren, whose budgets will be in fiscal trouble if voters reject the sales-tax extension.

Although Kerry indicated later she doubted whether the people who worked on the medical marijuana measure would join forces with anti-tax organizations in fighting the sales tax, she did say they would "help people make the connections.

"We are organized, and we are going to tell people that if they don't like how the cops are spending the money, like spending it to arrest someone who uses marijuana to prevent seizures, then they shouldn't tax themselves to pay for that sort of activity by the sheriff."

Defending his deputies' raid on the Corral home, Noren said Tuesday that "just because the district attorney doesn't choose to file charges doesn't mean it's OK" to grow marijuana.

"The public doesn't want a sheriff or a police department to decide whom to enforce laws against," he said. "And it's not appropriate for the whole county to start medicating itself."

In other words, he said, the Corrals "shouldn't be treated any differently from anyone else who grows marijuana."

As for medical marijuana advocates joining conservatives in opposing Proposition 172 and Measure P, Noren said, "That's their option."

Supervisors had little comment after the Corrals and other speakers expressed their outrage. Only Supervisor .