

SJMN FEB 7, 1996

## Board backs marijuana initiative

Drugs

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Yet another proposal to authorize the use of marijuana for medical purposes might be on the November ballot — this time with the support of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

The so-called Compassionate Use Act of 1996, an initiative that would allow Californians whose medical conditions might profit from the use of marijuana to use the herb, was endorsed by a 4-1 vote of the supervisors Tuesday.

The four who voted to endorse the measure did not explain their positions. Supervisor Ray Belgard, who

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cast the no vote, said he never takes positions on statewide ballot measures or legislation because he thinks such action is beyond the scope of the county board.

"This does not necessarily mean I oppose this initiative, though," said Belgard, former Watsonville police chief.

The matter was brought to the board by Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt, who noted that the county's alcohol and drug abuse commission urged the supervisors

to support the initiative.

In her cover letter, Wormhoudt said the measure "would ensure that seriously ill Californians would have the right to obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes if the use has been recommended by a physician who has determined that there would be a significant health benefit achieved in doing so."

Wormhoudt, whose district includes most of the city of Santa Cruz, said in her letter that marijuana "has proven to be an important asset in the treatment of cancer, anorexia, AIDS, glaucoma and arthritis."