



HOT TOPIC ISSUES

11.7.18

Senate Works to Uphold Voters' Will on Medical Marijuana

When Oklahoma voters in June approved State Question 788, allowing the use of medical marijuana, the Oklahoma Senate took quick action to implement a medical marijuana regulatory system in line with the will of voters.

Senate President Pro Tempore-designate Greg Treat joined with House Speaker Charles McCall to appoint a bipartisan working group of members from both the House and Senate to work on the issue. Treat tabbed Senator Greg McCortney to serve as the co-chair.

Treat said at the time about the working group, "This bipartisan group of senators and representatives will work with stakeholders as we seek to develop a framework that will guide the implementation of a medical marijuana industry. Oklahoma voters made their choice, and the Senate will work to ensure State Question 788 is implemented efficiently, effectively and safely in accordance with the voters' choice."

The group did just that, setting to work immediately behind the scenes and holding the first of 12 public meetings on July 25. The group heard from other state agencies involved in the process, medical marijuana advocates, from the health care community, from the business community, from law enforcement, national experts on testing issues, and held a hearing featuring general comments from members of the public. The group even set up an e-mail (sq788@oksenate.gov) to which the public can e-mail their comments, suggestions, and concerns about the setup of the medical marijuana industry. More than 150 e-mails have been received.

The meetings culminated with a bipartisan, unanimous vote on a set of testing priorities that has been sent to the Oklahoma State Department of Health. The testing priorities were the first in a series of steps by the Legislature to fully develop and implement statutes that govern a medical marijuana industry.

Senator McCortney said the group has worked well together, across party lines and chamber affiliations. He said the group's work will help ensure Oklahomans have access to safe medicine.

"So far, it's been a long fact-finding mission to learn as much as we can about this fledgling industry to ensure we respect the voters' will in setting up a system that's safe, effective and successful," McCortney said. "We've done in a few weeks what most states have taken years to accomplish. I appreciate the members of the working group, the leadership from Pro Tem-designate Treat and Speaker McCall, and the public's input. There's more work to be done, but the working group has taken significant steps and will continue to be a useful resource for the entire Legislature as we continue to implement the policies and statutes that will govern medical marijuana."