

# Alaska Quietly Legalizes Marijuana

BY MOLLY DISCHNER  
Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — Alaska on Tuesday became the third U.S. state to legalize marijuana. But the historic day passed with little public acknowledgment in a state with a savvy marijuana culture that has seen varying degrees of legal acceptance of the drug for 40 years.

Supporters said the day was a milestone, comparing it to the end of Prohibition. But unlike in Colorado and Washington state, there were no street parties and public smoking displays in Alaska's biggest cities.

Dolly Fleck-Phelps, a Kenai

resident with an ancillary marijuana business, said she thought people would look back on the day as a turning point for Alaska. "Absolutely this is history in the making," Fleck-Phelps said. "This is the opening of the door. Now it's time for the real work to begin."

Legalization marked the end of a 43-year political battle for Bill Parker, 70.

The Anchorage man, who was listed as a sponsor of the initiative, first banded together with a group of young Democrats elected to the state House of Representatives to introduce a legalization bill in 1972. "Gee, there weren't enough votes to worry about,"

the retired deputy commissioner of corrections said.

Parker's hopes for legal weed dwindled as he saw Alaska become more Republican and more conservative over the years. He said perhaps the marijuana vote marks the end of that pendulum swing.

Now that pot is legal, Parker is ready to take a pause to enjoy the moment, but he said he won't stop fighting.

"Well, it makes me feel good. It's not over, of course. The initiative passed by between 5 and 6 percent, so 40 some percent of the people voted against it. Not all of them are ready to lay down and go along," Parker said.

# Trial

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according to Knox County Sheriff Don Henery. The state filed a notice it was not alleging any aggravating circumstances, which means it is not seeking the death penalty.

Phillip Privett also faces a second felony charge, the Use Of A Firearm To Commit A Felony. The Class 1C felony carries a sentence of 5-50 years imprisonment.

District Court Judge Mark A. Johnson is presiding over the court proceedings. Thomas is prosecuting the case, while Privett's de-

fense is provided by attorneys Rodney Smith as Knox County Public Defender and Jeff Pickens with the Nebraska Public Advocacy Center.

Privett's bond remains denied, and he remains in the custody of the Knox County sheriff. The defendant remains housed in the Madison County Jail in Madison, Nebraska. He was initially housed in the Nebraska State Penitentiary for safe keeping.

The case began Oct. 20 when the Knox County sheriff's office and the Verdigre police responded to a report of a shooting at 620 Main Street in Verdigre. Linda Privett was found shot at her home and was

pronounced dead at the scene. Verdigre Rescue responded to the incident.

Phillip Privett was taken into custody by the officers, Henery said. There are no other suspects in the shooting.

The Douglas County coroner's office performed an autopsy in Omaha. The autopsy determined Linda Privett died from a gunshot wound to her face and neck, according to Henery and Verdigre Police Chief Dean Wavrunek.

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# Plan

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Hawley said.

Solum and Hawley called for limiting the size of the motor-fuel tax increases.

Rep. Julie Bartling, D-Gregory, said a closer look is needed at all of the proposed revenues and all of the needs. "As well as fair to the taxpayer," she said.

The Legislature's study committee on highway needs and financing developed the original plan last year. Then Gov. Dennis Daugaard unveiled his smaller proposal in January. Parts of both are in the Senate package.

The governor's plan originally called for a two-cent per gallon increase in motor-fuel taxes every year for perpetuity. Neither legislative chamber however supports allowing taxes to increase every year forever.

House Republican leader Brian Gosch of Rapid City said a vote yes for the House version of the governor's plan wasn't just for \$50 million in the next year but for additional tens of millions of dollars during the next 15 years.

Gosch said the increases in motor-fuels taxes and vehicle-purchase excise taxes alone would total some \$2 billion over the 15-year period.

He quizzed Sen. Mike Vehle about how transportation officials justified their needs. Vehle, R-Mitchell, is

the Senate Transportation Committee chairman and chaired the study committee last year.

"This is self-assessed," Vehle said about county and township road information.

He said bridge information is based on state-required inspections conducted every two years, while state road data came from the state Department of Transportation.

State Transportation Secretary Darin Bergquist said DOT needs \$143 million more annually on average during the next 15 years.

Gosch said the motor-fuel taxes and excise taxes would raise about \$200 million in year 15 of the package.

Bergquist said the first year's additional revenue to DOT would be about \$40 million and the amount would gradually increase each year.

Nathan Sanderson, the governor's policy director, said construction costs have doubled since 1999 when South Dakota's motor-fuels taxes were last increased.

The standard 22 cents per gallon on gas and diesel would be 45 cents if it had kept up, according to Sanderson.

Sanderson said the governor's proposal of adding two more cents per gallon per year wouldn't have any effect on tourism spending in South Dakota.

Five key components that were in the House version of the governor's plan before it was killed Tuesday were:

Two cents more tax per gallon through 2030, for a 30-cent increase atop the present 22 cents;

Increasing the state excise tax on motor vehicle purchases to 4 percent from the current 3 percent;

Annual increases in vehicle

registration (license plate) fees through 2030, depending on the price level for the registration: \$1 annually if less than \$75; \$2 annually if \$75 to \$150; and \$3 annually if more than \$250;

Special additional charges of \$80 annually for electric vehicles and \$40 annually for hybrids; and

Increasing the annual limit on county wheel taxes to \$48 per vehicle from the current maximum of \$16.

There also would have been other immediate adjustments in license plate fees for non-commercial vehicles, motor homes, recreational vehicles

and motorcycles.

An additional \$1.65 billion in additional fuel taxes would be raised over the 15 years under the House version of the governor's plan before it was killed, according to Dawna Leitzke, lobbyist for the South Dakota Petroleum Marketers Association.

She said the vehicle excise tax would generate another \$408 million over the 15 years, assuming no changes in vehicle sales prices or vehicle sales numbers.

"I would say that is a conservative estimate," Leitzke said.

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# Peace

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having received the good news of Jesus Christ and we are a Christ-centered family. We demonstrate the faith, hope and love of Jesus Christ through evangelism of worship, Christian education, fellowship and special ministry."

Trezona said she also hopes the name change will help draw in new members.

"We are kind of at a low point when it comes to members," she said. "We only have about 22 active members right now. But we have a lot of people that attend that aren't members. We figured that we ought to extend that to other like-minded people in the community that would like to attend occasionally or every week. We enjoy having people there and talking and meeting new families in the community."

Trezona said the church invites all types of community groups to use the church to hold their meetings and classes.

Groups such as Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), WeTu Art group, Girl Scouts, Yankton Stampin' Up Club and Ecumenical Religious Training Handicap (ERTH) classes use the facility often.

"A lot of times, we have groups that use the facility who aren't even a member of the church," Trezona said. "We like to have people use the church. The building is here, so we might as well make use of it."

Peace Church, located at 206 E. 31st St. also has room to host parties, weddings and funerals.

Swier warns passerby not to look for the new sign for the church right away.

"The sign in front of the church will be changed when the weather gets warmer," she said. "But internal references will have the new name."

Peace Church will continue to hold its worship service every Sunday at 11:30 a.m.

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