

Dominic Vita
Testimony in favor of SB 349

My name is Dominic Vita. I am here to support Senate bill 349. I'm a 28 year old Enfield homeowner , the Vice President of NORML CT (national organization for reform of marijuana laws), and I am an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran. I deployed to Iraq in February, 2003 with 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion USMC. After 4 months of front line combat in Iraq, my unit was sent home, the stop-loss was lifted and I was honorably discharged. Shortly after my return to the states I became ill with an unexplained multi-symptom complex, similar to Gulf War Illness. For the past 6 years I have been working with the VA and my personal doctors searching for a diagnosis, but also trying to effectively manage my pain. My doctors have prescribed a multitude of legal prescription pain medications and a number of anti- depressants in an effort to control my chronic pain, all of these drugs have provided minimal relief and the side effects would often negate any benefit. My primary care doctor has recommended the medicinal use of marijuana over drugs like morphine and oxy-contin because it effectively manages my pain without side effects and without addiction. Cannabis has been tremendously helpful in moderating my pain while at the same time improving my appetite.

Since forming Norml CT I have had the privilege of speaking with residents and veterans from all corners of the state. Our members have been writing and calling their legislators urging them to support decriminalization of marijuana. Residents are terrified of a government that will lock them away for using marijuana, they fear the very police force they pay taxes to support. Another victim was claimed by unintended consequences this weekend in my home town of Enfield. Police were called after a home invasion and arrested the 18 year old who lived there for marijuana possession. The Enfield board of education has to cut \$6 million dollars from the education budget, the state has cut funding for a sick veterans registry, and many schools are facing closure. How can we justify the costs associated with arresting someone in their own home for marijuana when we cut funding for our children's education? Decriminalization will save the state a tremendous amount of money, easing the burden on all CT tax payers, and ensuring we can fund our children's education.

While CT medical marijuana user's no longer have to worry about the federal government arresting them, we have absolutely no protections from state and local police forces. I am a disabled veteran and I smoke marijuana, I am not a criminal.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill.