

2009 -- S 1032

LC02940

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2009

SENATE RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL SENATE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE PROHIBITION OF MARIJUANA

Introduced By: Senators Miller, Blais, Perry, C Levesque, and Sosnowski

Date Introduced: June 26, 2009

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission to be known as the “Marijuana  
2 Prohibition Study Commission” be and the same is hereby created consisting of nine (9)  
3 members, all of whom shall be appointed by the Senate President, with appointment  
4 consideration given to the following: elected members of the Rhode Island Senate, local law  
5 enforcement officials, physicians, nurses, social workers, academic leaders in the field of  
6 addiction studies, advocates or patients in the state’s medical marijuana program, advocates  
7 working in the field of prisoner re-entry, economists, and members of the general public.

8           The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study and issue  
9 findings about the effects of policies forbidding the possession, cultivation, and sale of marijuana  
10 in the State of Rhode Island.

11           (a) The commission shall meet with the purpose of evaluating the effects and costs of  
12 marijuana prohibition, including:

13           (1) Whether and to what extent Rhode Island youth have access to marijuana despite  
14 current laws prohibiting its use;

15           (2) Whether adults' use of marijuana has decreased since marijuana became illegal in  
16 Rhode Island in 1918;

17           (3) Whether the current system of marijuana prohibition has created violence in the state  
18 of Rhode Island against users or among those who sell marijuana;

19           (4) Whether the proceeds from the sales of marijuana are funding organized crime,

1 including drug cartels;

2 (5) Any dangers associated with marijuana resulting from it being sold on the criminal  
3 market, including if it is ever contaminated or laced with other drugs;

4 (6) Whether those who sell marijuana on the criminal market may also sell other drugs,  
5 thus increasing the chances that youth will use other illegal substances;

6 (7) The costs associated with the current policies prohibiting marijuana sales and  
7 possession, including law enforcement, judicial, public defender, and corrections costs;

8 (8) The number of arrests and persons incarcerated for marijuana offenses in Rhode  
9 Island;

10 (9) The number and rate of unsolved crimes in Rhode Island, including for sexual assault,  
11 murder, theft and robbery;

12 (10) Whether there have been cases of corruption related to marijuana law enforcement;

13 (11) The amount of revenue anticipated if Rhode Island were to make sales of marijuana  
14 legal and impose a "sin tax" of \$35 per ounce or greater;

15 (12) The experience of individuals and families sentenced for violating marijuana laws;

16 (13) The experience of states and European countries, such as California, Massachusetts  
17 and the Netherlands, which have decriminalized the sale and use of marijuana;

18 (14) How marijuana's risks compare to other illegal and legal substances, including its  
19 chance of lethal overdose and dependence;

20 (15) Any other information relevant to evaluating the costs and success or failure of  
21 imposing criminal penalties on marijuana possession and sales and on failing to regulate its sales;  
22 and

23 (16) The study commission may also make recommendations regarding marijuana  
24 policies.

25 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
26 the call of the President of the Senate who shall select a chairperson.

27 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

28 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

29 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
30 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
31 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

32 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to  
33 provide suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

34 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the

1 Senate no later than January 31, 2010, and said commission shall expire on January 31, 2014.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
SENATE RESOLUTION  
CREATING A SPECIAL SENATE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE PROHIBITION OF  
MARIJUANA

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1           This resolution would create a nine (9) member special Senate study commission whose  
2 purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study and issue findings about the effects of  
3 policies forbidding the possession, cultivation and sale of marijuana in the State of Rhode Island,  
4 and who would report back to the Senate no later than January 31, 2010 and whose life would  
5 expire on January 31, 2014.

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