

N.J. pot bill such a drag!

N.Y. dealers fear cut in their profit

BY JOE KEMP
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DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

THE GRASS IS greener in the Garden State — and a whole lot cheaper, too.

New Jersey's medical marijuana law is a looming cloud for New York pot dealers who worry that profits are about to go up in smoke.

"It's going to cut a lot of the bridge-and-tunnel customers," one pot dealer told the Daily News. "I'm just trying to lock down who I have in the city. I have to stay on the grind."

On Monday, New Jersey became the 14th state to make a medical marijuana bill law, allowing the sick and dying to get some relief by smoking legal pot.

Within the next few months, New Jersey residents with cancer, glaucoma, seizure disorders and other serious illnesses will be able to get prescriptions for up to 2 ounces of pot every month.

The estimated cost for medical marijuana in New Jersey is roughly \$125 an ounce. The New York dealer who spoke to the Daily News said he sells the same product for \$500.

"You can't drop prices to match that," he said. "You'd lose hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"As I smoker, I think it's great. But from a business aspect, it's going to cut a lot of people," he said.

New York cops had no comment on whether they're worried about cheap and plentiful marijuana just across the Hudson.

The New York State Assembly passed medical marijuana legislation in 2007 and 2008, but it has not reached the state Senate floor for a vote.

Strangely, pot dealers and opponents of medical marijuana share similar fears about New Jersey's new law and the potential for New York to become state No. 15.

"You lose control of it if people are allowed to buy it," said Michael Long, chairman of New York's Conservative Party. "How do you know the patient won't

give the marijuana to someone else?"

Proponents of medical marijuana say both the law in New Jersey and the proposed legislation in New York make it difficult for people to abuse the privilege of legal pot.

Only genuinely sick people with prescriptions from their doctors can get the stuff, and they're not likely to give it up.

"You're talking about people who need this medication and aren't willing to sell it," said a spokesman for the Marijuana Policy Project in Washington.

Besides, New Yorkers who smoke pot for fun don't have to take the PATH train to New Jersey to score, said Assemblyman Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan), chairman of the Health Committee and sponsor of New York's medical marijuana bill.

"The reality is, people who want marijuana for recreational use in New York and don't mind breaking the law have no problem getting it now, as far as I know," he said.

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CLOSE CALL AS 'DAMAGES' GETS SHORT



Glenn Close, star of "Damages" series on FX, clowns with new cast member Martin Short at the red carpet showing of premiere of show's third season at the AXA Equitable Center on Seventh Ave. last night. Show will be televised on Monday at 10 p.m. Photo by Richard Corkery/Daily News

City, feds agree on school PCB testing

BY BILL EGBERT
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

THE CITY HAS agreed to test schools for PCBs and, if needed, come up with a plan to protect kids from exposure after a Daily News probe found the toxin in the window caulking of several schools.

The settlement between the city Education Department and the federal Environmental Protection Agency heads off a parents' lawsuit for now — and puts the schools under tougher federal scrutiny.

The deal dictates a million-dollar pilot study of five schools that could lead to much more testing.

"The program outlined in this agreement, along with general EPA guidance on managing the issue, will serve as a model for school systems across the country," said EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck.



News investigation found toxic chemicals in schools.

Because PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, were routinely added to caulking before the chemicals were outlawed in 1977, buildings nationwide constructed before then are at risk for serious PCB contamination.

The city had been in talks with the EPA since April 2008, when a News investigation found high concentrations of toxic PCBs in

the caulking of several school buildings, in violation of federal law.

The Education Department expects the pilot study to cost about \$1 million.

The EPA consent decree spares the city from having to pay millions of dollars in fines and also heads off a suit filed last year on behalf of Naomi Gonzalez, a Bronx

mom of two, by New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

"This doesn't get us all the way there," said Gonzalez, a teacher's aide, "but it's a real step in the right direction."

Following The News' probe, the city began testing old window caulking for PCBs — revealing contamination in 85 more buildings. The city has argued that left untouched, the caulking is safe.

The agreement, reached yesterday, does not require the city to test all schools or to remove all PCB caulking it finds, but the EPA will monitor the city's actions.

While praising the settlement as a "positive first step," Manhattan Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal (D-Manhattan) said she's still committed to a bill demanding city-wide testing.

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