

News...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:

August 2, 2011

For More Information:

State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford

(773) 378-5902

Rep. La Shawn K. Ford Wants to Hear from the Public on Marijuana Decriminalization

CHICAGO – With a recent call for marijuana decriminalization coming from Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) wants to have a public debate on marijuana decriminalization legislation he filed back in January, and is scheduling a town hall meeting for September.

“I want to commend President Preckwinkle, who is one of the most prominent public figures to speak the truth that low-level marijuana possession cases are clogging up our court system, drawing police resources away from serious crime, and are disproportionately affecting African Americans,” Ford said. “In January, I filed legislation to reduce the penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana, and I think it’s time we have a civil and public debate on the issue.”

House Bill 100, authored by Ford, amends Illinois’ Cannabis Control Act to make possession of one ounce or less of marijuana, or products containing marijuana, a petty offense. A first offense will result in a \$500 fine, a second offense would be a \$750 fine, and a third, or subsequent, offenses are a \$1000 fine. The legislation also changes the distribution of fine proceeds based on what agency made the arrest, allocating proceeds in differing ratios to the Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Fund, units of local government, and the county general corporate fund.

A recent investigation by the Chicago Reader found that the ratio of blacks arrested to whites arrested in Chicago is 15 to 1, and for those cases that make it through the court system, the ratio of blacks who plead or are found guilty increases to 40 to 1. The average street value of marijuana in the cases examined was \$55, less than the typical cost of an ounce of marijuana.

“By targeting people for possessing small amounts of pot, we are ruining lives by making it almost impossible for them to change their outlook through gainful employment,” Ford said. “When young people can’t find jobs and their families are struggling, they turn to even more serious crime, which benefits no one in our society.”

The date and location for Rep. Ford’s Marijuana Decriminalization Town Hall Meeting have not been finalized, but interested parties should contact Ford’s constituent service office at 773-378-5902 or email weeddebate@lashawnford.com to be placed on a notification list.