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Editorial: 'No' on Prop 1, 'yes' on 2

The following are Record-Eagle endorsements for Michigan's two statewide ballot proposals.

Proposal 1 -- Medical Marijuana

Despite years of anecdotal evidence that smoking marijuana can ease symptoms related to glaucoma, cancer, AIDS and other conditions, the bottom line remains: There is no scientific evidence that it works or, as important, that it works as well or effectively as other existing treatments.

That fact -- not to mention troubling language in the proposal itself -- is reason enough to urge a "No" vote on Michigan Proposal 1, known as the Medical Marijuana issue.

The proposed law would:

-- Permit physician approved use of marijuana by registered patients suffering from cancer, glaucoma, HIV, AIDS, hepatitis C, MS and other conditions -- all subject to approval by the Department of Community Health.

-- Permit registered individuals to grow limited amounts of marijuana for qualifying patients in an enclosed, locked facility.

-- Require Community Health to establish an identification card system for patients qualified to use marijuana and individuals qualified to grow marijuana.

Amid all the regulations, however, is a loophole that would allow registered and unregistered patients and primary caregivers to assert medical reasons for using marijuana as a defense to any marijuana-related prosecution.

That's a deal-breaker that opens the door for almost anyone to assert protections. What is the point of forcing people to register with a doctor and meet other restrictions if anyone can claim Proposal 1 as a defense?

Despite a host of wild Internet-fueled claims, the proposal would not lead to storefront pot shops like some that have sprung up in California after passage of a similar ballot proposal there. Some official opposition has also stretched the truth, such as White House claims that such proposals are "a clear strategy to ... legalize drugs."

But what counts here is that science does not support the claims of Proposal 1 backers and the loophole in the proposal is simply too great.

Vote "No" on Proposal 1.

Proposal 2 -- Stem-Cell Research

Mostly lost in the blizzard of misleading ads being run by opponents of Michigan's Proposal 2 is a simple but profound fact: Only embryonic stem cells that would otherwise be destroyed could be used for research.

Despite the bizarre claims of all kinds of evils, including human/animal cloning and more, that simple truth remains. If these cells are not used for research they will end up in the trash.

That fact -- and the fact that the vast majority of scientists and researchers say embryonic stem cells could someday lead to amazing cures -- make it easy to urge a "Yes" vote on Proposal 2.

The proposal itself is clear: Expand the use of human embryos for any research permitted under federal law, but only if: the embryos are created for fertility treatment purposes; are not suitable for implantation or are excess cells; otherwise would be discarded; and were donated by the person seeking fertility treatment.

The proposal would also prohibit anyone from selling or purchasing embryos for stem-cell research and block the Legislature or local politicians from enacting laws to prevent, restrict or discourage such research.

The list of false claims made by opponents seems endless. Proposal 2 would not in any way change Michigan's ban on human cloning, despite repeated claims to the contrary. It would not cost taxpayers a single dollar. It would not lead to animal-human cloning. It is not related, despite a vile ad hinting otherwise, to medical experiments in the '50s in which doctors did not treat 400 people infected with syphilis.

Opponents often repeat that stem-cell research is legal in Michigan, but they leave out the fact that researchers are limited to just two lines of cells approved by the federal government.

It is truly unfortunate that the opposition campaign (funded mostly by the Catholic Church and Michigan Right To Life) has gone to such disturbing lengths to fight Proposal 2.

What voters need to remember above all is the simple truth -- if these cells are not used for research, they will be destroyed. There is too much to gain by using these items designated for the Dumpster to throw away this opportunity.

Vote "Yes" on Proposal 2.