

'Marijuana' or 'cannabis'? Supes decide

By Hans Peter, Woodland Daily Democrat

POSTED: 01/27/18, 11:56 AM PST | UPDATED: 1 DAY AGO 0 COMMENTS

<http://www.dailydemocrat.com/general-news/20180127/marijuana-or-cannabis-supes-decide>

Tuesday's Yolo County Board of Supervisors meeting saw a small step for county officials, but a giant leap for cannabis advocates everywhere.

It's been over a year since Californians voted for legal adult use of cannabis, and Yolo County officials finally opted to officially refer to the plant as "cannabis" and not "marijuana," a word the industry has tried to shake for decades.

The small difference took all of two minutes for supervisors to discuss, when District 2 Supervisor Don Saylor said he wasn't sure of the difference, has been encouraged to call it "cannabis." Likewise, the state uses that language on their documents.

County Counsel Phil Pogledich said staff simply rolled with the way other jurisdictions "framed their tax measures." He said that of 21 different jurisdictions the county has studied up on, all 21 have included the M-word when speaking about cannabis on the tax ballot.

So what's the actual difference between marijuana and cannabis? The meaning behind the words.

Both words — along with a slew of others that make writing about the plant very interesting — refer to the plant itself. Terms like "pot," "weed," "gonja," "Mary Jane," "dro," "dope," "dank," "grass," "hemp," "hash," "trees," "puff," "cush," "devil's weed," "reefer," "skunk," "medicine," "sticky-icky," "chronic," "bud" and "herb" make writing puns easy, but each word comes laced with a history and vernacular, some more pejorative than others.

"Marijuana" marks a throwback to the war-on-drugs era stapled to Ronald Reagan's Presidency. Many believe prohibitionist officials then donned the Spanish word to suggest the plant was introduced by Mexican immigrants. That said, the word has been considered simultaneously misleading and racist. Other slang words for the plant may allude to a colorful history, but not the war on drugs.

The term "cannabis," on the other hand, is the common handle for the plant on a scientific level.

Supervisors, most of whom were not privy to this idea, had no problems adding that suggestion to their motion. During that meeting, supervisors voted to move toward a cannabis tax measure that will appear on the June 5 ballot.

Pogledich said that "marijuana" may have been used on ballots as a voter recognition issue. Many Yoloans who were alive during the war on drugs, and would identify the plant with the term "marijuana."

"I prefer to call it 'sacrament,'" snarked District 3 Supervisor Matt Rexroad, referring to an illegal grower that operated in the Capay Valley for years under the guise of Rastafarianism.

The recommendation will do little to affect the county's budget. In fact, a simple "control-F" search on digital documents should swap the words out in a manner of minutes.

In fact, Yolo County's current policy has a clause that states that when the word "marijuana" is used, the document means "cannabis."

"I'm OK with using cannabis," said Jim Provenza of District 4. "Well, not using it, but using the term."