

Lawmakers need to listen to the will of the people

Written by Laura Kiefert, Green Bay Progressive

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HOWARD - On Nov. 6, voters in 16 Wisconsin counties held advisory referendums on marijuana asking voters if they supported some sort of legalization. The majority of voters — 3 out of 4 — expressed overwhelming support, leaving many wondering what's going to happen now the issue is in the hands of our state representatives.

Unfortunately, in many races voters failed to elect representatives who shared their support, which leads to the question, how often do legislators vote in accordance with constituent opinion?



A number of scholars have suggested that most Americans have little to no effect over what the government does. In May 2017, John G. Matsusaka of the University of Southern California determined that legislators actually adhered to the will of their constituents only 65 percent of the time.

Furthermore, when the preference of a politician differs from that of his constituency, politicians tend to follow their own interests, beliefs, and ideologies over those of the people they represent.

While 65% is better than the 50% rate of simply flipping a coin when voting, it's still less than voters deserve.

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Whether or not to change marijuana laws is not a partisan thing. Most everyone knows somebody dealing with cancer, chronic pain, glaucoma, PTSD, or other conditions who has used, or wants to use, marijuana as part of their overall treatment.

We must demand state representatives listen to will of the people, refuse to allow this issue to be reduced to a debate over conflicting moral opinions, and change the law.