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July 28, 2021

To:

The Honorable Assemblyman Thurston Smith
33rd Assembly District
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0033

Subject: Plea for CA Legislators to contact Governor Gavin Newsom and request an immediate extraordinary session to address the intolerable proliferation of illegal marijuana farms across CA.

Dear Assemblyman Smith,

The Homestead Valley Community Council (HVCC) was formed in 1996 to address all matters affecting the Morongo Basin unincorporated communities of Yucca Mesa, Flamingo Heights, Landers, and Johnson Valley. We are comprised of delegates appointed through the community associations of each of these member communities. Member Johnson Valley is a proud community in your district.

HVCC wrote to you in April asking for help in solving the ongoing proliferation of illegal marijuana grow farms now reaching a magnitude of epic proportion. Communities like ours are being devastated by the deleterious impacts these unregulated illicit farms bring.

The matter has gotten worse since our last communication and will likely get even more dreadful if nothing is done immediately. In April it was estimated about 900 illegal marijuana farms existed in San Bernardino County. In just three short months since our last communication, that number has grown to almost 1200 illicit

farms. Inaction can no longer be an option.

Prop 64 (AUMA), the voter initiative that legalized adult marijuana use, promised it would end the black-market growth and sale of illicit marijuana in California. Instead, Prop 64 has caused an explosion of unlicensed, unregulated, unlawful grow farms that operate in plain sight with no fear of consequence. They tax local water resources, bring criminal elements into our once safe communities, cause ecological damage through irresponsible open discard of trash and human waste, and through the use of dangerous pesticides they devastate wildlife all the way up the food chain.

HVCC stated clearly in April we are not calling for legislative intervention on the adult personal growth and use of marijuana made legal through AUMA. We are only seeking remedy on the few sentences in Section 8 of AUMA that downgraded the penalties and fines for illegally growing and selling marijuana from the dissuasive felony status to the inconsequential minor misdemeanor. Recently both our County Board of Supervisors and state water contractor Mojave Water Agency unanimously passed resolutions calling for legislative intervention to reinstate the felony penalty and fines that Prop 64 took away. Public statements from law enforcement on the front lines identify the felony downgrade as THE cause of this scourge. It has made it impossible for them to respond effectively as indicated by the ever-expanding number of these illicit farms appearing daily.

We hope you realize the urgency of legislative intervention. We cannot wait until next year. The problem is growing at a rate that makes the potential for further devastation unimaginable and in some cases likely unrecoverable. We understand that no new bills can be submitted in the regular session this year, however Governor Gavin Newsom can call upon the legislature to convene a special session to address this matter.

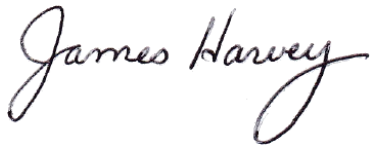
Homestead Valley Community Council has written to Governor Newsom strongly urging him to immediately call for the special extraordinary session needed to give you the opportunity to address the Prop 64 felony downgrade issue. We understand Governor Newsom is unlikely to do this solely through letters like ours. We need a concerted effort. Please use your position as CA Assemblyman to contact Governor Newsom and personally request this session. We hold onto hope

that the combination of letters from California residents and organizations like ours, along with requests from lawmakers in the legislature like yourself, will convince Governor Newsom to do what is desperately needed and call for the special session to address this issue now. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

We look forward to seeing you at the August 3rd LVEDA Town Hall.

Sincerely,

James Harvey

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Harvey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

President, Homestead Valley Community Council
(On behalf of HVCC)