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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 5, 2014

Pamela Hyde
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
1 Choke Cherry Road
Rockville, MD 20857

Michael Botticelli
Office of National Drug Control Policy
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Administrator Hyde and Director Botticelli,

I am writing to request an immediate investigation to determine if federal taxpayer dollars are being used illegally to influence a statewide election.

This November, Oregonians will be voting on whether marijuana should be legalized for adult use. After qualifying for the ballot as a citizens' initiative, this measure is known as Measure 91. With Oregon's vote by mail system, ballots for the November election will be mailed out to registered voters on October 15.

In August, several media outlets reported that a state summit in Central Oregon and a statewide "Oregon Marijuana Education Tour" were using federal grant money for the events. The summit and tour have been scheduled for October 1-7 (ATTACHMENT 1). The bias of the speakers selected, the overall one-sided focus of the events, and the proximity between these events and the upcoming election are cause for concern.

The headliner for the "Oregon Marijuana Education Tour" is a nationally known legalization opponent. Kevin Sabet has been called "the quarterback of the new anti-drug movement" and has traveled extensively across the country trying to stop states and local jurisdictions from legalizing marijuana. The tour also features Clatsop County District Attorney Joshua Marquis - the self-appointed spokesperson for the No on Measure 91 campaign.

Newspaper advertisements for the tour have been paid for by federal taxpayer dollars in at least one Oregon newspaper and there has been an effort to try and promote the ads and get them placed in other venues (ATTACHMENT 2).

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My understanding is the point of contact for these advertisements is a staff member for a non-profit that contracts with Jefferson County and receives federal dollars. She is also, according to the Oregon Secretary Of State Voters Pamphlet, the Director of the No on 91 Political Action Committee. The fact that the Campaign Director for No on 91 is also listed by the non-profit as a lead staff member to contact to place the ads is problematic at best. In addition, the same non-profit published a guide titled "Marijuana Educational Ads Statewide Media Campaign Summary," which provides a strategy on how the ads should be targeted – including a category for "General Voters" (ATTACHMENT 3). Using public dollars to try and target "General Voters" seems very suspect and should be investigated.

After the allegations arose that the summit and tour were a "smokescreen" for the No on Measure 91 campaign, the organizers for the state summit cancelled their event – yet they are still continuing with the tour. Many of the "Oregon Marijuana Education Tour" stops are being organized by county employees who are being paid with federal pass through dollars. The State of Oregon, through their Addictions and Mental Health Division, has informed the counties to not use federal grant money for the tour or materials related to the tour, and that participation in the tour would constitute a political act. However, it is my understanding that even after the State issued their order, county employees are still listed as site coordinators for the tour.

It is also worth noting that some of the prevention coordinators are employed by non-profits which are contracted to provide services to the counties. These non-profits receive federal grants, either directly or indirectly, and as a result are subject to the same rules and regulations regarding political activity and federal funds.

In addition to my concern about the potential misuse of federal dollars, these events appear to be in violation of two separate Oregon statutes (ATTACHMENT 4). The Oregon Supreme Court has ruled that public employees may be found personally liable for returning any taxpayer funds (including federal dollars) that were misused for political purposes. It would be extremely unfortunate for well-meaning public servants to be put in such an onerous position. I hope that you can provide some guidance on the appropriateness of using federal dollars in this fashion.

Again, I would urge this matter be investigated immediately. I look forward to a report of your findings.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress