



HENRY A. KOSHOLLEK/THE CAPITAL TIMES

Supporters of medical marijuana march on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Thursday.

Rally backs medical marijuana

By Lynn Wohlwend

The Capital Times

Eleven years ago, Jacki Rickert began losing weight.

"It got so bad that my daughter said to me, 'Mom, you look like you just walked out of a concentration camp,'" she said.

Rickert was eventually diagnosed with a nervous system disorder. She began using marijuana to stimulate her appetite and now weighs about 90 pounds.

"That might not seem like a lot, but it is to me," she said.

Rickert joined a rally of protesters at the City-County Building on Thursday as part of a nationwide push to legalize the use of medical marijuana. Medical marijuana advocates and local and state officials made up the group of about 25 people protesting federal medical marijuana policies.

Advocates join national effort

Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Ed Thompson spoke to the protesters in a show of support.

"I don't condone the use of illegal drugs, but the legalization of medical marijuana is long overdue," he said.

Thompson pledged to back a state Senate bill that would legalize the use of medical marijuana if elected governor. The bill, which was sponsored by state Reps. Frank Boyle, D-Superior, and Mark Pocan, D-Madison, never made it out of committee.

"I think it's time we had the courage to stand up and do the right thing," Thompson said.

Pocan also spoke in support.

"To close your eyes to compassion-

ate use of medical marijuana is wrong," Pocan said. "People have enhanced life quality because of medical marijuana."

Rally organizer Gary Storck agreed.

"It's wrong to make criminals out of sick patients like Jacki," said Storck, who is the communications director of Is My Medicine Legal YET?, an advocacy group for medical marijuana.

Storck, who is also a medical marijuana user, was born with glaucoma. He lost part of his vision to the disease before he was diagnosed.

Prescription medicines did not work well, he said, and he began smoking marijuana.

"I indulged in cannabis and later saw my doctor," Storck said. "He was able to lower the strength of my medicines."

Protests were planned for 65 cities across the country.