

Federal government says marijuana has no accepted medical use

July 13 2011, By John Hoeffel

Marijuana has been approved by many states and the nation's capital to treat a range of illnesses, but the federal government has ruled that it has no accepted medical use and should remain classified as a dangerous drug like heroin.

The decision, announced Friday, comes almost nine years after [medical marijuana](#) supporters asked the government to reclassify cannabis to take into account a growing body of worldwide research that shows its effectiveness in treating certain diseases, such as [glaucoma](#) and multiple sclerosis.

Advocates for the medical use of the drug criticized the ruling but were elated that the Obama administration had finally acted, which allows them to appeal to the [federal courts](#), where they believe they can get a fairer hearing. The decision to deny the request was made by the U.S. [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) and comes less than two months after advocates asked the U.S. [Court of Appeals](#) to force the administration to respond to their petition.

"We have foiled the government's strategy of delay, and we can now go head-to-head on the merits, that marijuana really does have therapeutic value," said Joe Elford, the chief counsel for Americans for Safe Access and the lead counsel on the recently filed lawsuit.

Elford said he was not surprised by the decision, which comes just after the Obama administration announced it would not tolerate large-scale

commercial marijuana cultivation. "It is clearly motivated by a political decision that is anti-marijuana," he said. He noted that studies demonstrate pot has [beneficial effects](#), including appetite stimulation for people undergoing [chemotherapy](#). "One of the things people say about marijuana is that it gives you the munchies and the truth is that it does, and for some people that's a very positive thing."

DEA Administrator Michele M. Leonhart sent a letter dated June 21 to the organizations that filed a petition for the change. The letter and the documentation that she used to back up her decision were published Friday in the Federal Register. Leonhart said she rejected the request because marijuana "has a high potential for abuse," "has no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States" and "lacks accepted safety for use under medical supervision."

This is the third time that petitions to reclassify marijuana have been spurned. The first was filed in 1972 and denied 17 years later. The second was filed in 1995 and denied in 2001. Both decisions were appealed, but the courts sided with the [federal government](#).

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