

# Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

## Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: February 9, 2011

### **Sheriff Arpaio Announces Special Enforcement Unit Targeting Medical Marijuana Frauds**

(Phoenix, AZ) Today Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio announced the formation of a Special Enforcement Unit, in partnership with former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Assistant Agent in Charge of the Phoenix Field Division Doug Hebert, targeting people who violate state laws against marijuana while trying to hide under the guise of the recently-passed Arizona medical marijuana law, Proposition 203.

Arpaio, a 26 year veteran of DEA and formerly the head of the DEA in Arizona, said he wanted to be prepared for criminals who believe that Proposition 203 will allow them to deal marijuana with impunity. "Proposition 203 permits the medicinal use of marijuana in certain narrowly defined medically-necessary circumstances. It will not be a get out jail free card that allows drug dealers and other criminals to sell to anyone with money or use it illegally."

Retired DEA Agent Doug Hebert says, "'Targeting criminals trafficking "medical marijuana" outside the law (Proposition 203) and rules established by the Department of Health Services; will be no different than DEA targeting those in the medical and pharmaceutical profession who violate public trust by illegally prescribing, dispensing, and possessing controlled pharmaceutical drugs".

Arpaio said in his experience there will be some who try to take advantage of the law to mask activities that remain illegal under state law. "While we are fortunate that many criminals are not very bright, there is a more clever part of the criminal element that will see an opportunity to use Proposition 203 to hide

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illegal operations. My job is to stop them, and that's why I'm forming this Special Enforcement Unit."

Sheriff Arpaio, Doug Hebert, and Arpaio's staff have already met with Arizona Department of Health Services Director Will Humble and various other interested parties to talk about implementation of the law.

Sheriff Arpaio pledged all appropriate law enforcement support to ensure that the law is implemented as intended by the voters. "Whether or not I agree with a particular law, when the people speak, I listen. I will not stand in the way of those operating legitimately and legally under state law."

Sheriff Arpaio also asked for cooperation from those involved in providing medical marijuana to patients. It would be helpful for those businesses to notify the Sheriff's Office if and when they will be transporting medical marijuana in Maricopa County. This will allow his deputies to know of lawful shipments, and knowing of this will ensure that the Sheriff's Office has full awareness of the additional risks that might go with transporting a product that may be targeted for theft and/or robbery by the criminal element.

Sheriff Arpaio hopes to make further announcements on the progress regarding this newly-formed unit in the near future. The Sheriff is hopeful that revenues derived from sales tax on medical marijuana will be used to help pay for law enforcement costs. **END**

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