

Community Comment  
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Sam Pennisi

### Transitional Woes

At almost 71 years young, I often think nothing could possibly surprise me. But I've been wrong in the past; maybe more times than I care to know.

When we bid the twentieth century goodbye, I remember thinking that perhaps the new century would bring a new atmosphere of how an increasingly crowded planet might think and act about how to get along with each other. Could I have been more wrong? We started with the Supreme Court picking our first President of the new century and both sides of the political spectrum just let it go. We watched as the court undermined our democratic heritage and just let it go. The partisan divide became an unbridgeable gap that has only gotten wider with time. We then elected our first black man as president only to see true obstruction politics dig in. We quickly saw just what a racist country we are and the fear of losing the white majority in the U.S.

That led to a complete fear based and racially motivated election that allowed a reality TV actor and real estate developer to become President. Trump's lack of knowledge, intellectual curiosity, a moral compass, and leadership abilities has led to a corrupt and treasonous administration. We are living through the destruction of our democracy in real time. A minority of voters has brought this about and only the majority can right the ship.

Maybe the 2018 election will change the dangerous course we are on.

Transitions are always difficult and there is no better example than the pot business. California seemed desperate to legalize the drug and so did the growers, sellers, and users. I guess the idea was that the drug could see the light of day and society would stop arresting and imprisoning recreational users. Local governments would have a new source of tax revenue instead of the cost of enforcing the law against growers and sellers. I think most people thought it was about time and a simple thing to do.

Like everything in modern life, it's not simple. Humboldt County, for example, had to develop a permit process to abide by the state law. That requires new regulations and new people to enforce the new rules. This takes time and money and legal opinions, and lawsuits, and multiple agencies. The breadth of issues are astounding. Take the growers, for example. An existing illegal grow needs to come into compliance with the law; including all the regulations that come with it. As with any business, there are parcel size and location restrictions, building standards, water use and other environmental concerns, and more. To file for a permit, you need to apply and fill out a form and various related documents. Often, you may need to hire specialists to complete certain aspects of the permit application. This not only costs money but requires the ability to understand the

requirements so the application can be acted upon. Incomplete applications or unintelligible writing sends the application back to the applicant.

None of these problems comes as a surprise. At this point, the cost seems surprising to some and the process seems overwhelming. Welcome to the real world. In our rush to legalize this drug, we have created an excuse for the small grower to remain underground. The tax revenue we receive will not pay for the headache this drug will remain. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is not faring well so far.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.