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Gov. Doyle signs bill outlawing hallucinogenic drug salvia divinorum



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Gov. Jim Doyle signed a bill Thursday outlawing salvia divinorum, a hallucinogenic herb. The bill was originally authored by former state Rep. Sheldon Wasserman in 2007 when he learned of salvia's potential to induce intense hallucinations when used recreationally.

"You can find out quickly, this has the potential for danger," Wasserman said.

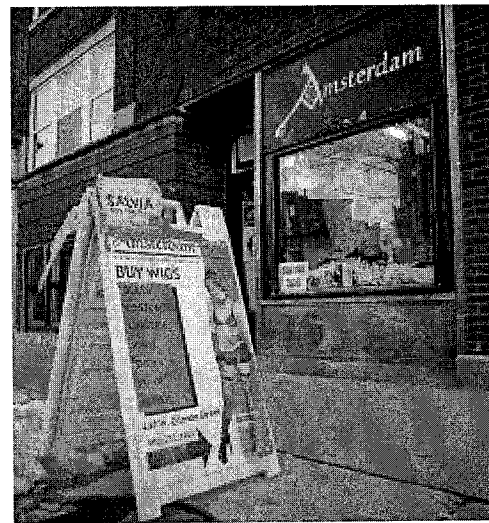
The legislation regulating salvia has since been re-introduced and passed in the Senate last month. Wasserman worked with Rep. David Cullen, D-Milwaukee, who was previously co-author of the bill and is now the primary author, to see the bill become a law.

"We worked together on this thing to really make this happen," Wasserman said.

The legislation prohibits manufacturing, distributing or delivering the active chemical ingredient and instates a maximum fine of \$10,000 for violators. Wasserman said the legislation is directed more toward the distributor and less toward the user.

Business owners currently selling salvia maintain a different belief about the drug. The owner of Amsterdam, the store located at 447 W. Gilman Street, says the shop has not had any problems in the ten years it has been selling salvia.

She said salvia is marketed as incense and works to facilitate a deep state of meditation. It was meant to be burned like regular incense and she said she has no knowledge of its misuse.



Danny Marchewka / The Daily Cardinal

Local shops like Amsterdam on Gilman St. will no longer be able to sell salvia divinorum after the recent legislation outlawed the substance.

"If people are smoking it, we don't know about it because we are not selling it as that," she said.

She also said her most loyal customers are age 40 and above and kids are not as interested in it.

Wasserman disagreed.

"[Salvia's] main use was to get high," he said. "There was never any thought that it was anything but a recreational drug."