

# GOOD NEWS FOR DOCTORS AND PAIN PATIENTS

On August 22, 2006 the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals granted a new trial for a Virginia pain specialist who was recently sentenced to 25 years for mis-prescribing narcotics. The Court ruled that the trial judge erred when he refused to let the jury hear the doctor's basic defense - that he intended to help these people. The 4th Circuit decision means that doctors acting "in good faith" have a right to let the jury hear that evidence.<sup>1</sup>

Two weeks later there was another hopeful sign, this time from the Drug Enforcement Administration. The agency's latest policy statement makes a serious attempt to reassure doctors that they will not be targeted just for prescribing large quantities of opiates.<sup>2</sup>

The agency also reversed course on their prohibition against multiple prescriptions. Once again patients who have difficulty getting to the doctor will be able to obtain their medicine for up to three months.<sup>3</sup>

While the merit of all this may seem obvious to an outsider, it took the combined efforts of dozens of medical experts, attorneys, pain specialists, academics, activists and officials to bring about these improvements.<sup>4</sup> We hope the 30 million Americans who are under-treated for chronic pain will benefit.

## **Common Sense for Drug Policy**

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