

Hub rips cops featured in soft-on-marijuana ads



By Dave Wedge

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Boston Herald Chief Enterprise Reporter

Wedge is the Herald's Chief Enterprise Reporter and writes Sunday's "Pols & Politics" column. He also covers music for "The Edge" entertainment section.

Boston cops and Mayor [Thomas M. Menino](#) are up in arms that pictures of two uniformed officers and a marked cruiser appear in new political ads supporting a controversial proposal to decriminalize marijuana.

"Their decision to incorporate the BPD brand into their ad campaign was very inappropriate," [Boston Police](#) Department spokeswoman Elaine Driscoll said. "They did not ask for permission and we in no way endorse this advertisement."

In one ad, retired Sgt. Howard Donahue says he supports Question 2 because it would free up cops to fight "violent criminals." The ad features an old picture of Donahue in uniform in front of a BPD cruiser.

Another ad features retired Lt. Tom Nolan and a picture of him in uniform while he argues that existing weed laws give offenders a lifetime criminal record that makes it hard to get jobs and student loans. Question 2 would make possession of up to one ounce of pot a civil offense punishable by a fine.

"I entered law enforcement to catch bad guys, not to deny someone an education for life just because they made a mistake," Nolan says.

While state ethics laws ban the use of taxpayer-funded resources in political ads, Yes on Question 2 spokeswoman Whitney Taylor said, "There are no ethics violations. Those were personal pictures from retired police officers."

Menino spokeswoman Dot Joyce also slammed the group's use of the BPD car and uniforms, saying, "It's an unfair tactic to try and confuse voters. The mayor doesn't support this ad."

In 1998, several Boston cops came under fire for appearing in uniform in a political ad for former state Sen. Lois Pines. In 1996, Sen. John F. Kerry drew sharp criticism for using a uniformed cop in an ad filmed in Lowell.

And in 2006, Somerville Police Chief Robert Bradley was accused of ethics violations for appearing in uniform in a political ad opposing the sale of wine at supermarkets.