

## **Don't turn small-time addicts into felons**

The Legislature is poised to do a most wonderful thing. In a bipartisan showing, state Reps. Katie Edwards, D-Plantation, and Dave Hood, R-Daytona Beach, and Sen. Rob Bradley, R-Fleming Island, have proposed legislation in the Senate that dramatically increases the amount of prescription narcotic pain medication levels subject to mandatory minimum sentencing laws. Partisan politics have been thrown aside in the name of common-sense solutions to the expensive problems that occur when low-level, nonviolent drug abusers are subject to minimum mandatory jail sentences for feeding their addictions. These bipartisan sponsors have identified these problems and are trying to fix them.

The Senate last week voted unanimously to pass its version of this new legislation. The House, it is hoped, will follow suit.

Those citizens of Florida who suffer pain prescription drug medication addictions can receive the counseling and drug treatment they need much more economically than being warehoused in our prisons and labeled as felons. Let us applaud this common-sense approach by the Legislature and the champion of this change in the law, Rep. Edwards.

**JAMIE BENJAMIN**

**President, Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers**

**Fort Lauderdale**