Murphy's campaign promises run into Ðscal and political reality, says Carl Golden

Carl Golden For The Press Feb 7, 2018

Plank by plank, Gov. Phil Murphy's campaign platform is being dismantled.

The latest promise to hit the wall is his pledge to legalize marijuana for recreational use. It has encountered growing resistance in the Legislature and at the local level as well. A handful of municipalities have enacted ordinances or promised to do so to ban establishments selling the drug.

At least six Democratic senators have promised to cast negative votes on any legalization bill and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, D-Middlesex, is decidedly cool to the idea.

While a certain amount of legislative pushback was anticipated, perhaps the most signiÐcant statement of opposition came from the pulpit, a treatise by Bishop Jethro C. James Jr., senior pastor of Paradise Baptist Church, Newark, and president of the Newark/North Jersey Committee of Black Churchmen.

James, a member of the governor's transition team, was unsparing in his criticism of the proposal.

Legalization, the bishop wrote, would create a "big marijuana" industry that "would only further hurt minority communities by bringing more drugs into our neighborhoods and our homes. The marijuana and the alcohol industries routinely target vulnerable communities as their proÐt centers."

He went on: "In states where marijuana use is legal, we've seen signiÐcant increases in youth pot use, homelessness and workers failing drug tests. The number of car accidents from those driving under the inÐuence of marijuana has skyrocketed and the black mar]routbe