

The Oakland club stopped distributing marijuana in 1998, when the federal government took steps to prevent the club -- and five other clubs -- from making pot available to members. California officials will argue that the state has the authority to enforce its medical marijuana law, but the Supreme Court will be looking at the narrower question of whether medical necessity is a justification for disregarding federal drug law. In addition to California, eight other states -- Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, Oregon and Washington -- have medical marijuana laws. Are medical marijuana laws a state, or a federal issue? Are medical marijuana laws just a scam, intended to give people permission to get stoned?

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Frugal Advisor

Posts: 2685

(4/30/01 10:49:35 pm)

CLAY USED TO MAKE ECO-FRIENDLY PLASTICS

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Clay might become an ingredient in future inexpensive, environmentally friendly, flame-retardant plastics. Scientists at Pennsylvania State University in College Park are adding particles of natural clay, only a few dozen atoms wide, to plastic. Clay and plastic normally mix about as well as oil and water, so the engineers coated the clay particles with an organic chemical that brings the two together. The end product is a tougher, flame-retardant composite that is less permeable to liquids and gases. When clay-laden plastics burn, the clay forms a char layer on the surface, protecting the material underneath. "Currently, chemicals used to make plastics flame retardant contain bromine, which produces poisonous combustion gases when burned," says researcher Evangelos Manias. "Using clay is a green alternative to current practices." The researchers reported their results in the journal *Advances in Polymer Sciences*.

[LL4e](#)

Frugal Advisor

Posts: 2718

(5/1/01 12:21:41 am)

SPY PLANE

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State Department officials said China has indicated that it'll accede to President George W. Bush's demand that U.S. diplomats be allowed to meet with the crew of an U.S. spy plane, which made an emergency landing in China following a collision with a Chinese fighter jet. However, they said that meeting might not take place until Tuesday evening. The tense standoff over the fate of the plane and the 24-man crew began early Sunday after a Navy EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft collided with a Chinese fighter sent to tail it. The Navy plane made an emergency landing at a Chinese military base on Hainan Island in the South China Sea.

Both sides blamed the other for the incident. The Chinese F-8 fighter jet and its pilot are still missing. The White House has declined to call the crew captives or hostages, but acknowledged they're being held against U.S. wishes. On Monday, Bush called for the prompt return without further damage or tampering of the crew and plane, which is equipped with highly classified sensitive surveillance equipment used to detect and analyze electronic signals emitted by adversary weapons and