

Common Falsehoods Heard About Legalizing Marijuana

It will raise valuable tax revenues – Legalization will raise some taxes – much less than promised -- and legalization will significantly increase costs.

Revenue side – So far all tax revenues have been grossly over exaggerated. We seem to believe this fantasy that “sin” taxes (alcohol, tobacco and now marijuana) provide valuable tax dollars. Look at your state’s budget; what do alcohol and tobacco bring in annually? It’s ~ \$367M and \$84M in California. This is not a significant amount of money in California, which has a \$110+ Billion budget. \$451M is only .41% of revenue – not a real solution to budget deficits.

Cost side – All regulatory structure is expensive in and of itself. Then add an all-cash industry, which requires an armored-car, tax collection methodology and armies of auditors to monitor accounting across all industry sectors – this makes regulatory costs even higher. Federal felonies are being committed even collecting these taxes. At the same time, there are real costs to increasing drug use in our communities. Remember **legalization = increased drug use**. So states see increases in healthcare, hospital and addiction services, law enforcement calls to drug-induced crime scenes – homelessness, small and large gun situations, nuisance calls for neighbor annoyances and disruptions, driving fatalities and accidents and domestic violence ⁵. These cost the public a fortune socially and economically.

It will eliminate the black market & dangerous cartel activity—Not true because, legalization is the perfect veil for illegal activity; the black market is emboldened and the black market players are the most experienced drug dealers in the market place. Why would they leave now that it’s legal? They are also the players with the most experience in working around the rules. Why would they play by new rules when the economics of taxing and regulating weed make it more expensive and leave a huge gap in the market-place for lower priced product – and those distribution channels are already well entrenched. They don’t leave or register with the state and more show up as seen in Colorado⁵ and Washington.

It will protect our kids – Setting a minimum using-age of 21 is NOT protective. Kids ages 12-25 are at risk for real and sometimes permanent neurological harms from marijuana; these are critical years for brain development. Unfortunately, 18-25 year olds are already the largest user group per capita in our country, while 12-17 year olds are the second largest user group of marijuana per capita. This alone begs the question of - why we would even consider legalization. ¹

Legalization completely changes the calculus of drug use and drug dealing. A decision to use drugs, prior to legalization, is a personal, one-on-one or small group decision. With legalization, it gets replaced with mass media encouragement to use drugs for a “promised lifestyle.” Coupled with this new marketed promotion, massive availability of marijuana in stores and homes (unlicensed home grows and storage of bought pot) increase access and therefore risk. Kids cannot be protected in this kind of environment.

Legalization “normalizes” drug use and destroys two of the most important and tested strategies for keeping kids away from drugs - 1) an honest perception of harm, and 2) limited access to the drug.

Prohibition hasn’t worked – Prohibition has worked well. More marijuana use -across all age groups - is found in almost every state where prohibition has been lifted by medical or recreational use laws. Considerably less use is found in states where marijuana use is prohibited by law. ¹

Common Falsehoods Heard About Legalizing Marijuana, cont.

It will free up law enforcement's time so they can focus on more

important/serious crimes – Red herring. “Law enforcement spends much more time on marijuana since legalization than it ever did prior to legalization.” -Sergeant James Gerhardt, Thorton Colorado Police Department. Colorado is finding all crime on the raise. Crime stats in Denver 3.5 years since legalization (Source-Denver Police Department Citywide Statistics):

- Total crime up 20%
- Murder up 12%
- Total assaults up 48%
- Weapons violations up 67%
- Restraining order violations up 97%
- Criminal trespassing up 356%

It will reduce traffic accidents/fatalities – Not true, because intoxication is intoxication. Traffic fatalities are up at least 50% in every study in Colorado & Washington; a 2016 AAA study shows fatalities doubling one year after legalization in Washington began; it's also been found that alcohol and other drug use goes up with marijuana use; and marijuana combined with alcohol makes a person 8x more impaired when driving.²

No one has ever died from marijuana – False. It is true that marijuana does not shut down the brain stem like many drugs of overdose that kill do, but countless die because of marijuana. Also, marijuana overdose is common in the form of psychosis and psychotic breaks that may not kill, but can permanently alter “normal” for a user. Traffic fatalities involving marijuana are increasing substantially,⁶ and marijuana users are 7x more likely to attempt suicide than non-users.³

Marijuana is not addictive⁴ – Untrue. 30% of marijuana users have a use disorder.⁴ 9-17% of people who try marijuana will become addicted. Another 10-15% will become heavy users organizing their lives around the drug. Marijuana affects the Nucleus Accumbens - part of the pleasure/reward pathway in the brain. Anything we ingest that affects the Nucleus Accumbens has the potential to be addictive. Additionally, longitudinal studies from UC Davis and Duke published in 2016 show considerable downward trends among heavy users in a variety of “quality of life” categories – job quality, retention and wages, relationships, parenting and social success.

The war on drugs has failed– it is unclear what people mean when saying this? Is it that people still do drugs? Is it that people still get locked-up for drug offenses? Is it that there are still drug dealers in our midst? By this logic we can say the “war on murder has failed” or “the war on mental illness has failed,” etc. Is the answer - to stop trying to address these issues? Are there people in jail for marijuana drug offenses – yes; these are usually felony offenses for things like selling marijuana to minors, using minors to sell marijuana, large scale trafficking - like 400 kilos of pot in the back of a truck. These are real crimes against society and a violation of public safety.

If we are trying to say that the sentencing for criminal drug offenses need to be restructured or that “3-strikes” is hurting too many people in an excessive way, all of these conversations can be had, and laws can be changed. None of this requires the legalization of marijuana; it's barely related. There are less than 1% of inmates in federal prison for low level possession⁷. Check your state's laws regarding low-level marijuana possession. In California, possession has been an infraction (less than traffic ticket) since 2010 and a non-incarcerable offense since 2000.

¹SAMHSA.gov, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, ²R Harman/M Heutis, *Cannabis effects on driving* - 2013, ³Arendt & Silins Studies, Young adult cannabis use studies- 2006-2014, ⁴NIDA 2010, ⁵RM High Intensity Drug Trafficking Impact Report – 2016; ⁶2016 FARS data; ⁷ONDPCP study – who's really in prison for marijuana; **Compiled by Parent Movement 2.0 (info@ParentMovement2-0.org)**