

Marijuana legalization – college



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To Some people, its a relaxing herb, something to temporarily pull the mind from reality. The aroma is unmistakable, the potency various, and there are roughly sixty five million people smoking it. Im talking about Cannabis Sativa, the illegal strain of hemp known as marijuana. This plant provides many medical benefits that far outweigh the side effects.

It has yet to be proven to be addictive or deadly. Marijuana as it stands right now is an illegal narcotic, but I think the drug, with its physical, psychological, spiritual, but most importantly, medical benefits, should be legalized. Marijuana is one of the oldest cultivated plants. (Nahas, 1986) The first people to introduce the potential healing properties of marijuana were the Chinese.

About five thousand years ago, the people of the plains of Central Asia began cultivating the plant for its oil and fiber. The United States was introduced to marijuana in the 16th century. It was brought over by the Spanish and British and used for its fiber.

The plants intoxicating properties were only discovered in the late 19th century.

It was used for the production of rope and cloth until the 20th century and now it is widely a drug used preferably for pleasure. The plants therapeutic potential became known in the Western countries during the nineteenth century.(Abel, 1996) From 1840 to 1900, more that one hundred articles on cannabis appeared in European and American medical journals, recommending it as an appetite stimulant, muscle relaxant, painkiller, sedative, and for eliminating convulsions. Since then, marijuana has

undergone many tests and thorough analysis for its use as a medical value. The NIH (National Institute of Health) is one of the many advocates for medicinal marijuana.

They claim that marijuana may be helpful in the alleviation of chemotherapy, to reduce nausea and enable the patients to eat. The drug also helps in the stimulation of appetite and reduction of the loss of lean muscle mass in AIDS patients.

These AIDS victims also find that the drug also helps with the wasting syndrome that often characterizes the terminal illness. It has also been proven it can prevent epileptic seizures.(Potter, 1998) In addition, marijuana aids in the reduction of interlobular fluid pressure in the eyes caused by glaucoma, which can causes serious damage to vision, and in some cases can lead to blindness. Migraine sufferers have found relief form their headaches, and victims of spinal injuries and multiple sclerosis reported that marijuana controlled their spasms.

(Randall, 1998) Pro marijuana legalization groups such as the Physicians Association for AIDS Care and the National Lymphoma Foundation argue that marijuana should only be used to treat terminally ill patients. (Mack, 2001)

Among those patients are the AIDS victims who find that marijuana stimulates their appetites so they can fight off dangerous emaciation, and cancer patients for whom the drug alleviates nausea that often accompanies chemotherapy and sometimes makes lifesaving treatment possible. These lobbying groups also complain that stronger, more dangerous drugs such as morphine and other pain killers are legal to prescribe. This brings up the

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ongoing argument: why not legalize marijuana since it is less expensive, easier to grow, and far less dangerous than other drugs that are used medicinally? The plant has many other benefits as well.

The fiber of the hemp plant is so strong that it can be used to make thick sturdy rope, clothing, paper, and shoes. Its seed also contains oil that can be utilized for many things such as varnish. Recently there was an experimental car that ran ten thousand miles using hemp seed oil for fuel. In some countries, the seed is used for bird and cattle feed and also in the manufacturing of soaps. Something else not usually known, it that the seeds can be roasted and eaten.

Marijuana is defined as the mixture of leaves, stems, and flowering tops of the hemp plant, in the genus Cannabis.

(Dudley, 1999) There are three species: Cannabis Sativa, Cannabis indica, and, Cannabis ruderalis. The hemp plant now grows wildly around the world and can be cultivated anywhere with a hot season. There are 421 chemicals in 18 different chemical classes that have been detected in the hemp plant. It synthesizes at least 61 distinct substances called cannabinoids that are not found in any other genus of plants.

The most significant source of these substances is 1-delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol. This is an oily, water insoluble fluid more often called THC. (Dudley, 1999) There are already some THC counterparts on the market right now. (Baird, 2001) They are dronabinol and marinol. These drugs are the closest it gets to medical marijuana, however they are in no way smoked.

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Marinol and dronabinol are made into a sesame oil and supplied into gel capsules.

These drugs are making huge advancements in the legalization of marijuana and many doctors are accepting them, but are still not the go-to drugs and only used when all else fails. On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are many other doctors argue that marijuana should not be used for any medicinal purposes at all. They argue that the drug has too many short and long-term effects.(Abel, 1993) When you smoke marijuana, it can produce a change in mood, mental abilities, coordination, blood pressure, and pulse. The result is the state most commonly referred to as the high.

Included is an increased state of well-being, relaxation and sleepiness. Short term memory is impaired, and the capacity to carry out goal-directed problems is reduced. The repeated use of marijuana has been linked to a number of long term effects, some of which are still unproven. There have been studies done that show people who use marijuana on a regular basis may develop serious problems.(Abel, 1983)

Some researchers say it may cause brain damage, low sperm count in males, and lung cancer.

Among females, frequent use may cause menstrual irregularity. National polls show that more than 70% of the American people , from both sides of the political spectrum, support controlled access to marijuana for medicinal purposes.(Rosenthal, 1996) Despite fierce opposition from the federal government, voters in California and Arizona passed ballot initiatives in 1996 favoring the legalization of marijuana. So you have to wonder; if support for <https://assignbuster.com/marijuana-legalization-college/>

medicinal marijuana is so high, then why have only a few states taken steps to change the policy? There are several reasons why I think marijuana still remains illegal. It is a political issue kicked around by several special interest groups. Most of these groups fear that if marijuana were to become legal, it would be a threat to the home, tearing families apart, causing them to abandon traditional values.

In this case, the groups are using marijuana as a scapegoat for nation-wide family problems.

Many agencies that are against the legalization of marijuana such as the Drug Enforcement Agency, and police, both state and nation-wide, and the penal systems who all agree that marijuana is a gateway drug.(Baird, 2001) Most people who use marijuana begin to do so between the ages of 12 and 18.(Abel, 1983) In most cases they try smoking marijuana because of the combination of peer pressure and curiosity. These anti-drug agencies believe that after trying marijuana, some people want to move on to harder, addictive drugs.

All of these studies however, have been inconclusive, showing no concrete evidence that this is always the case. In order to pass A bill to legalize marijuana, there is a very long drawn out process. The bill or proposal for the law can originate in either the Senate or House of Representatives of the United States Congress. Both sides must pass the law in its exact form, and the president has to sign it. If a group wants marijuana to be legalized on the federal level it has to go through a specific committee within the House or Senate.

The bill later has to go through many revisions and hearings before it is approved.

If the president does decide to ever legalize marijuana, it must also pass Congress with a two thirds majority.(Rosenthal, 1996) Though the bill has been kicked around for many years now, there still remains many groups struggling to get it passed. The Drug Policy Foundation (DPF) is an independent, non-profit organization with over 23, 000 supporters that publicizes alternatives to current drug strategies. They believe that the current policy on drugs is not working.

It takes away individual rights, is extremely expensive, creates a new class of criminals, subsidizes a dangerous black market, does not control drug use trends, and ignores the health aspect of legalization. The main goals of the DPF is decriminalization, medicalization, and legalization.(Rosenthal, 1996) They are trying to get marijuana available to adults in regulated market, similar to US liquor laws.

This organization is seeking to teach the public new ideas and promote alternatives to the drug war. The government spends billions of dollars every year fighting to stop the use of marijuana and other drugs. Marijuana, however is still in very high demand.

There is a very extensive and widespread black market and with it comes crime, in turn leading to overcrowding in the prisons. In effect, the government does not really solve the problem at hand, instead it creates a new one in its place. If marijuana ever caused a single death, it didnt leave any fingerprints. (Krassner, 2001, p.

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2) This quote is saying though there have been claims that marijuana is a deadly drug, yet there is no documented proof that anyone has died from smoking too much marijuana. Due to the protection of the twenty-first amendment, alcoholic drinks are legal, yet alcohol is solely responsible for the deaths of over 100, 000 Americans and counting. Cigarettes, also legal, contain many of the same chemicals as marijuana.

Tobacco is directly related to the deaths of over 400, 000 Americans.(Mack, 2001) The voters in the states of California, Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, and Oregon have made a crucial step towards the legalization of marijuana. They have voted and passed legislations the would make marijuana legal to use medicinally.

Unfortunately, the federal government will not allow people suffering from various illnesses including, AIDS, cancer, glaucoma, and anorexia to legally use the drug which could help them in their pain and suffering. Is it right that a cancer patient should be punished and fined because he or she didnt feel like vomiting after chemotherapy? Why should an AIDS patient who wanted to gain weight after medications caused loss of appetite, and in turn caused unhealthy weight loss, not have opportunity to use marijuana. Patients are being refused the right to be in comfort and peace. By keeping marijuana illegal, it is costing taxpayers \$7. 5 billion dollars a year.

Among other things, this money is being wasted on capturing and often times imprisoning an unnecessary class of criminals.

My resolution would be to spend this money on pursuing and prosecuting violent criminals and keeping them from being repeat offenders. There are

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so many benefits of legalizing marijuana, far outweighing the negative aspects. Physical, psychological, spiritual, economical, and medical benefits are all being denied because marijuana, as it stands, is an illegal narcotic. George Washington once said, Make the most of the hemp seed. Sow it everywhere. (Rosenthal, 1996, p.

95) Would you consider the first president of the United States a criminal? In this country there are people who drink responsibly, people, I think, should be able to use marijuana responsibly as well. Though marijuana has been illegal for over thirty years, there is are roughly 65 million Americans, one third of the population, who use or have used the drug. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

was quoted in 1963, One has not only a legal, but a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.