

Free argumentative essay on the case against marijuana legalization

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The legalization of marijuana has been a very controversial case for decades, with strong arguments on either side. For most of the 20th century and beyond, it has been illegal in the United States and other countries, turning its sale and usage into a vast underground market that has gone untapped by any professional outlet. Some say that it is a harmful, addictive drug that leads to health detriments down the line for those who use it. However, there are others who claim that it is perfectly safe, not addictive, and could be an incredible source of income for a legitimate economy. The legalization of marijuana has the potential to create a new drug culture that could increase incidences of crime and health hazards. In this argumentative essay, the pros and cons of marijuana legalization will be explored and discussed.

First, marijuana has been shown and verified to have substantial detrimental effects on the human body. Medical marijuana is often used as an anesthetic in a large number of countries all around the world (Koch, 2006). Glaucoma is another condition in which medical marijuana is distributed to patients, as it helps alleviate the symptoms and increase comfort in the person suffering, including lowering eye pressure (Southall, 2010). Fifteen states, as well as the District of Columbia, currently allow medical marijuana to be sold and prescribed to its citizens to this day (New York Times, 2011). Ostensibly, medical marijuana's purpose is to relieve pain, nausea, and loss of appetite in those patients who have debilitating conditions, such as cancer or AIDS. However, there has been no true scientific evidence to prove that marijuana truly relieves these symptoms or whether it provides a placebo effect (Bensinger & Dixie, 2002).

Marijuana, if legalized, is said to bring in substantial tax revenue for state and federal governments, a blessing in today's economically charged climate. There is a substantial demand for marijuana, mostly due to its illegal nature; however, it would take a substantial amount of effort to create a feasible system for marijuana regulation. As marijuana is already closely tied to the existing criminal and gang culture, it would be impossible to remove its distribution from instances of crime (Bensigner & Dixie, 2002). As illegal distribution of marijuana would continue unabated regardless of its legal status, legalizing it would not prevent instances of drug-related crime. While many claim that drug use would diminish, some say that the legalization of marijuana would simply contribute to an even greater drug culture and presence in America, simply permitting said drug use to go unchecked.

There are many other societal claims that people give for decriminalizing the drug. The legalization of marijuana would also allow those who would otherwise not enter a life of crime to avoid it altogether; this frees them up to be productive members of society, and it saves the taxpayer money for preventing another prisoner that must be housed in already overcrowded prisons. The prison system is also structured in such a way that rehabilitation and reintegration into society is extremely difficult. This can happen to even those who are only guilty of marijuana possession; the prison experience is often tied to a life of violence behind bars, which is carried back into civilian life, making them far less suitable for integration into society than they were before (Carter III).

Despite the arguments of pro-marijuana proponents, there are far too many drawbacks to legalization to make it feasible. First, marijuana is addictive, and that it can also act as a gateway drug to harder drugs, such as cocaine or heroin. Studies have shown that marijuana usage blocks neurons and replaces neurotransmitter chemicals, potentially causing permanent brain damage (Koch, 2006). Also, it has been shown that marijuana use is not medically sound, and that there are no real measurable results found in people who take it to address medical conditions (Dixie and Bensinger, 2010).

One of the most evident problems with the issue of drug legalization is the legal and logical loopholes that one would have to take - it is a slippery slope to stop criminalizing marijuana. Many questions would have to be asked, including how much marijuana would be allowed, how strictly it would be regulated, the presence of an illegal market, etc. (Rangel). It is claimed that the simple logistics of decriminalizing marijuana would lead to much bigger costs in the long run than would be present if we continued to treat it as a criminal activity. There are many examples of countries that have not seen marked decreases in criminal activity after legalizing marijuana, and the increased rate of addiction would continue unabated. Italy's heroin death rates are staggering now that their drug laws are lighter, and Alaska, with its decriminalized marijuana laws, shows rampant use of the drug, even mixing it with cocaine (Bennett).

Legalization would also not address the true problems that lie behind the issue of crime and poverty in this country: a lack of infrastructure, poor

economy, and low national morale (Rangel). To legalize marijuana would be to effectively throw in the towel on the social problems that make huge drug cultures possible, and legalization would only be addressing one small symptom, not the systemic problems that it contributes to.

Evidence shows that the case for medical marijuana is merely a smokescreen for allowing recreational use to run rampant, and to make an easier case for the total legalization of the drug. Gang use and crime would increase as a result of the legalization of marijuana, and that youth would abuse it to a debilitating degree (New York Times, 2011). There are even concerns among many pro-marijuana advocates that legalization would drive up prices, despite their desires for greater legitimacy for cannabis – the loss of romanticism related to pot smoking might make the number of people who smoke decrease if it is legalized. (Palmeri and Marois, 2010).

Government regulation of medical marijuana via its legalization would not substantially increase quality control to the point where a patient can rely on the cannabis they get from their dispensary far more than any illegal dealer. Also, people who are prescribed medical marijuana in a legal state could still be fired from companies which have no-drug policies (Southall, 2010). This would also diminish crime levels across the board, as people would be much more willing to go through legal channels to get their marijuana, as opposed to those who would otherwise not turn to a life of crime doing so because they just want to be able to smoke marijuana. It could become a bumper crop, with many researchers looking at a large drug tourism boom for any states that legalize marijuana, turning it into a larger-than-life industry that

cannot be ignored. However, this would also dramatically increase crime rates, as more legal marijuana becoming available would allow more sources for criminal marijuana activity to occur. What's more, there is the possibility that the criminal drug trade would simply move on to harder drugs, and spend more resources to create a higher illicit drug trade in drugs like cocaine and heroin.

The debate regarding marijuana legalization is an impassioned and multifaceted one; both sides carry their own unique points, which are backed by logic and some degree of research. However, when the evidence is examined fully, and the advantages and disadvantages are weighed, the clear frontrunner is the case against legalization of marijuana. The amount of money that could be received from taxing marijuana usage is difficult to track, and would not be worth the social and economic benefits that are claimed by those advocating for legalization. Also, the positive health effects that marijuana provides people from a medical context (anesthesia and the like) are not substantial enough to make a huge difference in the lives of patients. Not only that, the real focus should be on eliminating the cultural factors that lead to a rampant crime and drug culture, not the drugs themselves (which this type of legislation would ignore). With this in mind, legalizing medical marijuana would not be a wise choice.

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