

Speech on marijuana legalization

Law



A well-known issue, right now, in the USA is that of the legalization of marijuana. This controversial topic is on the minds of our entire country. Whether or not to legalize marijuana has been a nation wide debate for years. In this informative speech I will be discussing only facts and opinions. Opinions and facts will come from organizations such as The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, Marijuana Legalization Organization and the Drug Policy Alliance. Marijuana Legalization is an issue because there are so many individuals using the substance illegally.

These individuals feel that Marijuana is not a harmful substance and can serve to profit states that legalize it. The biggest concern on everyone's mind is that of health risks. Most people feel that it is in the best interest of the nation for marijuana to remain illegal. Marijuana Legalization Organization states that that is not entirely true. " Health considerations provide arguments to avoid excessive use of marijuana, but ultimately each individual should be allowed the personal freedom to decide whether or not to use marijuana. (MLO) In their opinion, as with anything taken in excess, marijuana is only harmful to those who choose to use it. The example used in MLO is that of an excess amount of unhealthy food. "[N]umerous studies have shown that foods with a lot of cholesterol and fat are unhealthy. Should we outlaw bacon? "(MLO) The thought is that instead we need to educate individuals and let people make their own decisions as we do with things like fatty foods, cigarettes and Alcohol. " A recent survey of research found that long term marijuana use did not have a significant effect on cognitive abilities.

The report was published in the July 2003 Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society. " This is also stated in the list of facts about marijuana on the Drug Policy Alliance Website. They state that, not only are there no long-term cognitive impairment but, "[m]arijuana has been proven helpful for treating the symptoms of a variety of medical conditions. "

Medical marijuana has proven to be of significant relief for cancer, glaucoma, and aids patients as well as individuals that suffer from neurological disorders.

While there are the medical reliefs from the use of Medical marijuana, but DPA also states that the substance has not shown cause of mental illness or to increase risk to cancer. The next claim is that Marijuana is a gateway drug. Webster defines a gateway drug to be " a drug (as alcohol or marijuana) whose use is thought to lead to the use of and dependence on a harder drug (as cocaine or heroin)"(<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>) " Some people claim that using marijuana will make you want to use other drugs, like heroin, cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, and ecstasy.

They argue that marijuana acts as a stepping-stone, or a gateway, that leads people to harder drugs. They support their argument with statistics that show that most people who use hard drugs have tried marijuana before. " (MLO) " There is no conclusive evidence that the effects of marijuana are causally linked to the subsequent use of other illicit drugs. Preliminary animal studies alleging that marijuana " primed" the brain for other drug-taking behavior have not been replicated, nor are they supported by epidemiological human data.

Statistically, for every 104 Americans who have tried marijuana, there is only one regular user of cocaine, and less than one user of heroin. Marijuana is clearly a "terminus" rather than a gateway for the overwhelming majority of marijuana smokers. " (norml) MLO states " In essence, the link between marijuana and other illegal drugs stems from the fact that they are illegal. Because they are illegal, marijuana and other drugs are only available on the black market, and anyone who enters the drug market is likely to be exposed to more than one drug.

The solution is simple: by legalizing and regulating marijuana sales, we will eliminate the connection to hard drugs. " (MLO) They use Holland as an example. " In Holland, where politicians decided over 25 years ago to separate marijuana from the illicit drug market by permitting coffee shops all over the country to sell small amounts of marijuana to adults, individuals use marijuana and other drugs at rates less than half of their American counterparts. " (norml. rg) The argument is that, if marijuana were not illegal it would not be a problem. The DPA website states that the majority of the individuals that use marijuana never even use any other illicit drugs. This statement disproves that common misconception about marijuana being a gateway drug. Finally my sources argue that keeping marijuana illegal it is costing more than necessary. MLO claims that " Cost of keeping marijuana illegal = cost of active law enforcement + cost of prosecution (and defense! of accused offenders + cost of incarceration of convicted offenders + hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue that would be generated if drugs were legal and taxed + cost of foster care and social services for children of incarcerated offenders. " " Washington state would save about

\$105 million a year if marijuana were legally regulated, according to University of Washington Economics professor Dick Startz. " " The US Federal Government Spends More Than \$12 Billion Per Year on Drug Control Programs.

Federal drug control budgets do not separate spending by drug, so there is not a precise figure available for the amount that is spent on marijuana alone. Also, these figures do not include any spending by state or local governments, which are likely to be substantial since state police, courts, and prisons are constantly busy dealing with marijuana offenses. " They also state that " US Marijuana Crop Estimated to Be Worth Over \$35 Billion.

A new statistical analysis indicates that marijuana is America's most valuable cash crop. If these figures are even close to the truth, a logical system to regulate and tax marijuana would produce billions of dollars in revenue every year. " According to DPA, the fight that the United States is having against drugs in all is costing \$51, 000, 000, 000. They also stated that if California would profit annually an estimated \$1, 400, 000, 000 if marijuana were taxed and regulated.

There are only two major solutions to this issue; to Legalize or not to legalize that is the question. Legalization could stand to earn the US economic growth but it could also lead to even more people using or abusing the substance. Keeping it illegal could have the government spending money that they don't necessarily need to spend to regulate the use of this substance or this could be positive by keeping individuals from abusing it. Only time will tell! Does anyone have any questions?