

Drug legalization

Law



The debate over drug legalization has existed for decades. It is a hot topic for discussion among young and old alike. While many different opinions have been argued over, most of America can agree on one thing—we have a serious drug problem in the United States. Solutions to this problem have been tossed about; we should create harsher laws for drug users, we should legalize the “less dangerous” drugs in society, we should legalize all drugs and set standards and regulations regarding their use and distribution. The “war on drugs” was popularized during the Reagan administration and has been political mantra for conservative politicians.

The three-strikes law was established as a deterrent for repeat offenders, but has been criticized for its lack of effectiveness. Instead of decreasing drug-related crime, the prisons have been filled beyond capacity with these so-called dangerous drug offenders. An obvious racial bias manipulated into the laws has created a steady flow of prosecution against minority users and distributors. Distinctions between such drugs as cocaine and crack (which are basically the same) has shielded many white offenders from prison time, while guaranteeing a lengthy stay for blacks and hispanics.

Frustration with the lack of success of this expensive “war” has caused some to consider legalization of drugs as a better alternative. The degree to which this should occur varies among the population. Some feel that marijuana is no more harmful than alcohol and tobacco and should be regulated and taxed as a legal substance. Others feel that all drugs should be legalized, therefore eliminating the need for street distribution and unsafe practices, like needle sharing. I personally feel that drugs are an extremely harmful influence on society, especially our youth.

I also feel, however, that the rush to punish drug users and dealers has caused an irrational response from legislation. Mandatory sentences, regardless of mitigating circumstances or previous history, has created a unequal and racially biased atmosphere for sending drug offenders to prison for unreasonable lengths of time. While I don't think that legalization of drugs will solve this problem, I do think that a complete overhaul of drug laws is in order. Common sense and basic fairness could eliminate much of the unnecessary over- crowding in the prison system today. The focus should be on rehabilitation not retribution.