

The legalization of marijuana from the non-smokers perspective



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I think that it is fair to say that I am a very, very zealous supporter of the legalization of marijuana. I preach about it to my friends, my family, and anyone else who will listen. I collect signatures for official petitions that will be sent to representatives who might hold the power to do something about it. I exercise my rights as a constituent regularly, calling congressional offices often, and recruiting other people who agree with legalization to do so as well.

My enthusiasm on the subject is apparent to anyone that I speak to about it, and for some reason my keen interest in the issue almost always draws people to the same conclusion. I must smoke marijuana myself. When I inform them that, in fact, I do not smoke, they raise their brows in dubious expression, and I find myself having to explain that just because I don't smoke herb myself doesn't mean that legalization wouldn't benefit me in some way.

The fact that most people would assume that only potheads would want marijuana legalized both medically and recreationally is due to a massive misunderstanding of the plants and its effects. That they would be so wrongly impressed about cannabis is to be expected though, since for almost 75 years there has been a prohibition on its use that was justified by the facts and studies that began with Henry Anslinger's successful crusade against the substance. Even though study after study has proven over and over again that the majority of his claims about the evil effects of marijuana are unsubstantiated, unreliable, and just plain untrue, these myths are deeply ingrained in the minds of many Americans, particularly the older generations (who, it should be noted, also happen to be

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the most active voting population). Technology has made leaps and bounds in studies of pot, many of which deem it relatively harmless, and some who even deem it beneficial. But even as far back as 1944, studies pointed to the irregularities between Anslinger's claims and the plant's actual effects.

Just 7 years into the marijuana prohibition, the La Guardia Committee published findings that refuted many of his main allegations: that marijuana was highly addictive, conducive to lewd sex-crazed behavior, and that it directly caused criminal behavior, just to name a few (New York Academy of Medicine, 1944). This was only the first of countless studies that cast pot in a very propitious light, and the studies of present day are only confirming La Guardia's conclusions. These 75 years' worth of favorable data has made it plain to supportive non-smokers like myself that the problems that are caused by prohibition are completely unnecessary, and that legalization would be beneficial to non-smokers and smokers alike. Legalization is superior to decriminalization in that it could generate an amount of money that would knock out a sizable portion of our national debt. If a decriminalization decree was passed, overall there would not be too much of a change. Marijuana smokers could happily partake of their intoxicating herb, content in knowing that there would be not be any penalties imposed on them for doing so.

This is nice for the smokers, but the implementation of decriminalization of marijuana related offenses would not really benefit non-smokers in any type of equal way. However, if there was a legalization of marijuana for both medical and recreational use, it could be just as rewarding to non-smokers

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as the smoker's peace of mind is to them. Right now, the taxation and regulation of alcohol generates around \$5.6 billion dollars a year (Brooks, 2010).

The excise tax on cigarettes is even more impressive; in 2009 the government had a gross cigarette tax revenue of almost \$16 billion (Ritchie, 2010). Both these quotes are the culmination of all 50 states. The estimated amount of revenue generated by the single state of California alone is a projected 1.

4 billion dollars (Blackstone, 2009). If even a fourth of the remaining 49 states legalized, regulated, and taxed marijuana business the way California is ready to do, the sky high figures that would pour back into the pot (excuse the pun) would blow alcohol's and cigarette's tax revenue out of the water. The implications of all 50 states pulling in this kind of profit are staggering.

With the economy still recovering from a recession, the legalization of marijuana might just be exactly what we "smokers and non-smokers alike" need to successfully stimulate the economy back into a more comfortable state. During the recent recession, you could not turn the channel without seeing every news station reporting on the unemployment rate. If marijuana was legalized, it would open up an entirely new field of business. That booming business will require thousands, if not millions, of employees, over a whole spectrum of positions from the CEOs of the most prominent marijuana corporations to the farm workers who plant the seeds from which cannabis sativa will grow. California and several other states

have already begun capitalizing on the medical marijuana business, employing thousands of people in the numerous ??? dispensaries??? popping up all over the states, and they are only catering to a tiny fraction of marijuana users ??” the ones who can obtain a prescription.

If the door was opened to the entire weed consuming population, more stores, bars, and retail sales businesses would be required to keep up with the customer demand. Government jobs would also have to be created if regulation requirements were to be enforced. Drug crime by no means only affects the drug users. Non-smokers are just as affected by the crime rates in this particular area. To the neighborhood dealers on the corners toting illegal handguns in their waistband, to the most vicious and terroristic drug cartels, the production and sale of illegal marijuana is an often violent and unpredictable. A recent study on the effects of the cartels on the regular non-using populations along the U. S.

/Mexico border found that 1 in 5 people met the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Partial Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The drug cartels of these border lying areas has made the city of Ciudad Juarez in Chihuahua, Mexico one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Local papers report on average 7 murders a day, though there is evidence that this number may actually be lower than the actual daily homicide rate (Taylor, 2011). Of course, the drug cartels don??™t solely traffic in marijuana; they are notorious for the harder drugs as well, like cocaine and heroin. But the legalization of marijuana would surely damage a significant portion of their profits, because if a person can just walk to the local herb store and purchase some of the highest grade pot available, there would be <https://assignbuster.com/the-legalization-of-marijuana-from-the-non-smokers-perspective/>

no need for their illegal supply and inflated prices. This also brings up another issue that would directly affect the non-smoker: the manpower, time, money, and prison space it takes to find, prosecute, and jail marijuana dealers and the countless smokers in the United States. In 2008, there were 14, 000, 615 arrests, and 1, 702, 537 were drug related.

Of those drug related crimes, 49. 8% were marijuana related ??” and 89% of those marijuana related arrests were for possession alone (The Light HD, 2011). Legalization would mean the manpower and time it takes to investigate and prosecute these victimless offenders could be focused back on more dangerous crimes, crimes which physically and emotionally hurt people ??” smokers and non-smokers alike. Opponents of the legalization of marijuana seem to almost always argue that if people were allowed to smoke weed they would end up hurting a nonsmoker. I can??™t tell you how many times I have heard: ??? Well if you let them smoke it legally, then you are going to have people showing up to work stoned out of their mind, and that makes it unsafe for everyone else who works with them!??? or, ??? Then you will just have potheads smoking themselves stupid and then getting behind the wheel of a car. They??™ll be killing people left and right!??? These are two arguments that honestly irritate me.

I may be a non-smoker, but I have enough common sense to know that if the government was going to legalize ANY substance with intoxicating effects, it would do it with strict codes of conduct for where people may use it and what they may not do while on it. Exactly the same type of rules they strictly enforce with alcohol. People (for the most part anyway) know that it is against the law to drive while drunk, and that if they come to work while <https://assignbuster.com/the-legalization-of-marijuana-from-the-non-smokers-perspective/>

under the influence of alcohol they may expect to lose their job. Why the opposition believes this can work with alcohol but not with marijuana is beyond me, especially when the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration has confirmed marijuana's relative safety compared with alcohol. One of their studies ??? entitled " Marijuana and Actual Driving Performance???" found that the negative effects of marijuana on driving are " relatively small" and less than those of drunken driving.??? Even more notable I think, is that they also concluded ??? that alcohol encourages risky driving, while marijuana appears to produce greater caution. This is because marijuana users are more aware of their state and able to compensate for it, which other studies have concluded as well.

??? (Haven, 2007). Just because it is legalized does not mean that people are going to suddenly start smoking as much as they can get their hands on, or stay deadheaded 24 hours a day. The people who will do that are the ones who have been doing it long before it was legalized.

Plus, just because it is legal does not mean everyone will smoke it. Marijuana is a choice the same way alcohol and tobacco are choices. I personally am not a fan of the type of high that comes with using marijuana; it is simply a preference, though I know that there are other people smoking pot because they prefer that specific type of intoxicated feeling over the intoxicating effects of alcohol. To each his own. In closing, I want to mention probably the most meaningful benefit of legalizing this powerful plant. Marijuana has been used for the treatment of numerous medical conditions and has proved it highly effective. It??™s literal, physical effects can potentially enrich the life of someone you love.

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We almost all know someone who is a marijuana user, it is hard not to, as common as the practice has become, despite being illegal. Doctors in medical pot-tolerant states have been known to use weed's natural tendency to induce hunger in cases of anorexia (Kotowski, 2007). It has also been commonly prescribed to cancer patients wracked by pain we can't even imagine, and in many cases has worked just as well as the highly addictive, opium based painkillers that are usually dispensed to these suffering people even though they are easily abused and sometimes fatal. In fact, Leonard Paulozzi of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that prescription painkillers have now surpassed heroin and cocaine as the leading cause of fatal overdoses in most big cities, like New York and Philadelphia. Pairing this type of information with statistics like the death count of alcohol in 2003 – a startling 20,687 – makes the claim some people still use that marijuana is a more dangerous drug than the legal ones we have now seem rather preposterous, since the number of deaths from overdoses of marijuana totals 0 ever. If we might be able to treat our sick loved ones by letting them use a remedy that is infinitely less dangerous than prescription medicine and has no agonizing withdrawal symptoms, then legalization has certainly benefitted the non-smoking wife, husband, parent, grandparent, friends and relatives.

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