

# Argumentative essay on debate over legalization of drugs

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The legalization of drugs has been a very controversial case for decades, with strong arguments on either side. While there has been few who argue that harder drugs like cocaine and heroin should remain illegal, the same is not true with marijuana. 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 an incredible revenue stream of a highly demanded product that is safe to use. In this argumentative essay, the pros and cons of drug legalization, focusing on marijuana will be explored and discussed.

First, marijuana has not been shown or verified to have any detrimental effects on the human body. Also, marijuana has a substantial history of medical and clinical applications for people with certain conditions. 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.

Marijuana, if legalized, could bring in substantial tax revenue for state and federal governments, a blessing in today's economically charged climate. If the recently downturned Proposition 19 had passed in California, nearly \$1.4 billion in tax revenue would have been earned by the state (New York Times, 2011). This could have been used for prison and law enforcement budget enhancements, which is very important in a time when many police departments are understaffed, and prisons are overcrowded. There is a substantial demand for marijuana, mostly due to its illegal nature; the tapping of this untouched market is rife with possibility, as the demand would remain, but government could tax the purchase of marijuana purchasing, particularly for medical purposes (Nadelman, 2006).

This could help budget deficits immensely; Berkeley's mayor, Tom Bates, requested a tax increase on marijuana dispensaries that would add a substantial amount of revenue to the city budget, closing a \$16.2 million gap in funding that is in desperate need of filling (Palmeri and Marois, 2010). Other cities are experiencing similar benefits by taxing its medical marijuana; Denver generates approximately \$2 million a year from marijuana taxes on its 256 dispensaries, and California is seeking to increase taxes in order to have the same results in its large medical marijuana market.

There are many opponents to marijuana legalization, their reasoning being primarily health-based. First, they claim that marijuana is addictive, and that it can also act as a gateway drug to harder drugs, such as cocaine or heroin. It is implied that marijuana usage blocks neurons and replaces neurotransmitter chemicals, potentially causing permanent brain damage (Koch, 2006). Also, opponents state 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). Another opponent believes 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. They claim that 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).

These opinions could not be further from the truth. Experiments performed on the use of marijuana have found only positive results, and in some cases has helped people immensely with a variety of symptoms, including nausea from cancer treatments (Koch, 2006). Also, the demand for marijuana is much greater than anticipated by many; nearly 46% of people in a 2010 Gallup poll stated that they would like marijuana to be legal. In a sample of

20 respondents, when asked about their opinion on marijuana legalization, 40% said they would prefer legalization, while 60% desired varying degrees of restriction in its legality. According to this study, males are far more likely to pull for marijuana legalization than women, regardless of actual experience with the drug.

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 for legalization of marijuana. Any perceived negative health effects are so inconsequential as to be unimportant, and the sheer amount of revenue that could be earned from taxed, legal marijuana is sufficient to allow its legalization. Also, the positive health effects that marijuana provides people from a medical context (anesthesia and the like) are far too widespread to be ignored. With this in mind, legalizing medical marijuana would be a prudent, profitable and prescient choice.

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