

# Example of research paper on federal marijuana policy

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



## **Introduction**

There has been increasing support for ending the U. S.'s nearly century-long experiment with prohibition of marijuana and replacing it with regulation. The infamous Election Day in Washington and Colorado, where for the first time ever, a majority voted in support of abolish this policy highlight this political reality. Obama got the same percentage of the vote as legalizing marijuana in Washington, and in Colorado, legalizing marijuana received more votes than Obama by a wide margin. Americans are in support of abolishing marijuana prohibition in record numbers due to a wide array of reasons. The current enforcement of prohibition on cannabis encroaches upon civil liberties, financially burdens taxpayers, prompts disrespect for the law, unevenly affects communities of color, and obstructs legitimate research on medicinal properties of the plant. This paper looks at the past, current, and future of federal marijuana policy and how formal organization such as federal and state government, political parties, healthcare, professionals, voters, and interest groups, such as the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) have influenced the policy.

## **Actions by the key formal political actors**

The formal political actors in federal marijuana policy include the state, the department of justice, congress, and MPP. Two democratic lawmakers, Earl Blumenauer and Jared Polis have proposed two bills to the House of Representatives with the aim of devising a new federal policy toward marijuana. The first bill aims to end the federal ban on marijuana use, and transfer jurisdiction to states over its use and regulate it in a similar way to

sales of alcohol. The other bill would require levying a federal tax from the sales of marijuana. However, the bill will probably face obstacles in the House where the Republican has a majority and controls the legislation that passes on. This may hold to be true because a similar bipartisan effort by other representatives failed to gain footing in 2011. Currently, eighteen states, including Oregon and California allow sales of marijuana for medical use to help patients with pain and other related conditions, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, which tracks state laws.

President Obama and some key Senate Democrat have expressed their willingness to support relaxing federal enforcement of the prohibiting marijuana for those in possession of small amounts of the drug. Their willingness to support relaxing regulations of marijuana was a reaction to new laws approved by voters in Colorado and Washington. Despite the gradual move by states toward controlled legalization, federal law still classifies marijuana as a highly dangerous drug and makes it a crime to sell or possess marijuana even in small amounts. Obama told Walters that the nation is at a point where it can support widespread legalization of marijuana, and cited limited government budget and shifting public opinion as major reasons to build a middle ground on punishing use of marijuana. Obama added that it is a complex issue because the Congress has not amended the law. Obama also said that he heads the executive branch, and are therefore supposed to carry out law. The major concern remains on how to reconcile federal laws that still maintain that possession of marijuana is a federal offense and state laws that legalizes marijuana. Additionally, Obama's administration has also released documents instructing U. S.

attorneys to consider not using resources in prosecution of federal crimes if they comply with state laws.

Another significant formal actor in federal marijuana policy is the state government. Two congressional representatives behind the federal marijuana bills made it possible for people to vote against prohibiting marijuana enabled Washington and Colorado states last November to legalize possession of marijuana in small quantities. That wave of support seems to have echoed through the U. S. Congress who has made formal question the prohibitionist drug policy of the federal government in the form of marijuana reform bills. The president and the Attorney General have remained relatively silent whether they respect the will of the voters to legalize use of marijuana to move forward without interference by the federal government.

Another key stakeholder is the Attorney General Eric Holder who is already receiving conflicting advice as he tries to configure out the best response that the federal government should give regarding the decision by voters in Colorado and Washington to legalize marijuana for recreational use.

Democrat Senator, Patrick Leahy advised Holder to focus on prosecuting bigger federal crimes as he addresses the issue of automatic spending cuts ordered by Congress. However, others want Holder to use his position as the official of the nation's top law enforcement to get tough with states planning to ignore federal drug law. Holder has told senators that he is reviewing new laws of the states and plans making a quick decision after meeting with governors of both states.

## **Actions by the key informal political actors**

Interest groups play fundamental role in the policy making process. Citizens exercise their responsibility through communication with policy makers.

These communications takes place either individually or collectively. Interest groups such as Pew Research Polling have conducted surveys on the issue of legalizing marijuana and the data shows that Americans want to legalize marijuana. Such information can help inform the decision of lawmakers concerning the issue and arrive at a policy that many will accept. More recently, voters in Colorado and Washington voted in favor of measures remove criminalization and giving civil penalties for adults in possession of cannabis. Marijuana garnered 55 percent of voters in favor of Amendment 64, which allows possession not more than one ounce of marijuana and/or cultivating more than six plants of cannabis by people above the age of 21. The voters have longer-term measure that seeks establish regulations that govern commercialization of marijuana by licensed retailers. Similarly, in Washington, about 55 percent of voters were in favor of I-502, which limits the production and sales of limited amount of marijuana for adults.

Additionally, they also seek to eliminate penalties to adults in possession of not more than an ounce of marijuana.

NORML, an organization whose is to work towards reforming marijuana laws has been effective in moving public opinion towards repeal of marijuana prohibition in order ensure responsible use of marijuana by adults. The organization has achieved many of its objectives including mobilizing voters in Colorado and Washington to vote against marijuana prohibition. Passage of such measures significantly affects the federal cannabis prohibition.

Commenting on the historic votes, Deputy Director of NORML, Paul Armentano commented that alcohol prohibition passed through the same process, and with increased efforts, the federal government would be forced to abandon the policy. Increased awareness among voters in the U. S. will help push for to eliminate marijuana prohibition.

The media are responsible for influencing policy outcomes because they help define social reality. When representative Jared Polis and Earl Blumenauer went public to stand for marijuana law reform, the media quickly picked up the story. The story made appearances in more than one hundred media outlets available on the web including Time Magazine, Wall Street Journal, and Rolling Stone. To the public, this gives them a good view of the general attitude that the media hold towards marijuana drug reform. Although most of the coverage on the story was fair, some articles stood out. According to Goller and Barbar, the manner in which people process information makes them vulnerable to the influence of the media. The bills introduced by Polis and Blumenauer are not only affecting the Congress, but also the public discourse regarding marijuana policy and how the mainstream America perceive the issues. Appearance of such stories in the media evokes further the understanding of the media on drug reform policy, which helps reporters eliminate misleading arguments when they emerge. With the increasing level of criticism from the media on federal marijuana policy, propaganda instigated by prohibitionists losses one of its motives and credibility.

## Conclusion

Obama believes that there is no reason to prosecute recreational marijuana smokers or those following the law, then it follows that it does not make sense to prosecute people involved in medical marijuana operations. The move by Democratic lawmakers to push their two proposed bills at the federal level may end up into legalizing marijuana and taxing the drug instead. Despite the publicity that the bills have received in Washington, in reality, the bills are not likely to move forward the GOP-controlled house. Those opposing legalizing marijuana argue that the drug will not bring the economic windfall that the proponents have proposed. They also maintain that legalizing the drug will worsen the drug problems currently experienced by the states, such as addiction, crime, and violence.

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