

# Guns down, weed up

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To puff or not to puff, that is the question. Growing up you learned and was always told that “ Drugs are bad for you” or even perhaps learned about or participated in Drug Abuse Resistance Education also known as the D. A. R. E program. Regardless of how the topic of drugs was introduced, as a child, you followed the instructions of authority figures because let’s face it, it was the right thing to do. In today’s society, the mainstream drug of choice is Marijuana. It is all around us daily and becomingly inevitable. From your favorite t. v shows, music and music artists, movies and possibly a family member, marijuana has been at the forefront of our everyday lives.

Marijuana is the most commonly known illegal drug in the United States. The controversial decision to legalize marijuana has been a heated topic to debate for many years. Out of all of the drugs in the world, why is it that this drug remains illegal nationwide? Since the existence of this drug to the public, it has been a constant warfare for legalization. However, the decision to legalization marijuana is slowing making its way around the world including the Nation’s Capital. No matter how much government officials try to censor this drug, it becomes more and more prevalent in today’s society. Many people ask the question “ why should marijuana be legalized”? While some challenge that question and ask “ why shouldn’t it be legalized”? To some, the idea of legalizing marijuana may seem like a bad idea however, there are many great beneficial factors for legalizing it. Marijuana has been tested and proven to have a positive impact on the American society which will ultimately help us thrive as a nation. Despite the opposition and views of critics, legalizing marijuana nationwide is beneficial because it brings health benefits, financial benefits and stabilizes public safety.

Marijuana is an herbal plant known nationwide. It is often times referred to as weed, Mary Jane, herb, grass, pot, reefer and numerous other terms. It is derived from the cannabis plant known as *Cannabis sativa* which is a mixture of dried flowers. Marijuana can be smoked and or consumed in the form of tea or edibles such as gummies, cookies or brownies. Currently, there are two main cannabinoids that are of interest in proving that medical marijuana is beneficial. In *From Marijuana to Medicine.* Issues in Science and Technology, John Benson describes the “ two main cannabinoids from the marijuana plant which are Cannabinoid (CBD) and Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)” (par. 1). Cannabinoid is a cannabis compound that does not make people feel “ high” and can actually counteract the psychoactivity of THC. Due to the richness of the CBD, it is non-psychoactive than THC-dominant strains making it more appealing for those with health disparities (Benson). The other cannabis that is heavily sought out is THC. In this strain, the main active ingredient in it is called delta-9 tetrahydro-cannabinol, commonly known as THC (Benson). This is the part of the plant that gives the “ high”. There is a wide range of THC potency between these cannabis products.

Although one in the same, one of the main differences between medical and recreational marijuana is the purpose for which it is used. Medicinal marijuana is known to increase appetite, reduce nausea, decrease pain and inflammation and control muscle problems. More and more people are becoming pro-marijuana legalization due to ongoing health studies. There are many reasons why people support the legalization of medicinal marijuana and one of those reasons is its health benefits. The use of marijuana for medical purposes has been legalized in 23 states including the

District of Columbia. Some states have legalized marijuana whereas others have not. Contrary to popular belief, other countries like Canada have already legalized it. According to Randi Druzin in *Personalized Medical Cannabis Treatment Plan Critical to Success*, “ since 2001, Canadian doctors have been prescribing it to treat many conditions, ranging from seizure disorders and nausea caused by chemotherapy to anxiety, depression, PTSD, and insomnia”. Medicinal marijuana is an effective treatment for a variety of medical issues such as cancer, arthritis, chronic pain, HIV, epilepsy, Alzheimer’s, glaucoma and multiple sclerosis just to name a few.

Unlike other drugs such as alcohol, painkillers, and cigarettes, there is no proven evidence that marijuana is addictive. It is also concluded that “ marijuana seems to have fewer negative health effects than legal drugs, like alcohol, caffeine, or tobacco, and kills far fewer people” (Druzin). While critics may argue that there could possibly be an addiction, unfortunately, there is no factual evidence that it is. Many critics who are anti-marijuana legalization say it’s bad for you because of its negative image. Some could argue that carbohydrates are not healthy for you, however, for someone who is treating a patient who is suffering from bulimia, they may deem it to be good for that person. Like carbohydrates, marijuana may be unhealthy for the purpose of recreational usage however, we must not overlook its health benefits for someone who may suffer from one of the mentioned health ailments.

Another claim that marijuana is bad for you from anti-marijuana protestors, is the idea that people would abuse the drug. Many consider this drug to be

a gateway drug which could lead to the use of other harmful drugs and or become addictive. It is thought that once a person tries marijuana they will be inclined to try harder and more dangerous drugs such as heroin or prescriptions for painkillers. The increase of susceptibility would cause financial pressure on insurance companies in regards to healthcare coverage. While this point may hold to be true, the same could be said about the use of tobacco and cigarette smoking. However, that drug (tobacco) is legal. Unlike Opioid's and Percocet's etc., there have been no reported deaths of an overdose on marijuana. In Drawing upon Science for Resolving Controversies Surrounding Marijuana writer Doug Wagner states that, “overdose appears impossible, making marijuana, not a drug comparable to alcohol, heroin or cocaine” (par. 5). If marijuana was legalized for medical reasons only, government officials would be able to control the amount in which one is prescribed. Although the FDA has made conscious strides in the direction of aiding in legalization by approving two-man made cannabinoid medicines, dronabinol (Marinol) and nabilone (Cesamet) (Wagner) – there is still more that needs to be done to make it medical marijuana legal. Like other drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes food and sweets etc. it must be done in moderation. In addition, “research has not shown that marijuana use changes brain structures, as for example it is known with excessive alcohol consumption” (Wagner). It's important for government officials to recognize that if other countries have legalized this drug to demonstrate its contribution to health disparities we should do the same. Especially with it being a medicine and treatment for various health disparities that have been

proven to be effective for several ailments. This knowledge alone further proves why marijuana should be legalized.

Marijuana and money combined represent the big payback! Pro-marijuana legalization protestors believe that the legalization of marijuana will bring a financial increase to the economy. The economic benefits of legalizing marijuana would not only benefit consumers but producers and the government as well. Regulation of the drug will bring in money into each state in addition to the nation if legalized. Farmers would benefit because it is easily grown and easily maintained. Economically legalizing marijuana would attract more entrepreneurs to the growing market which would produce more farmers and production. The legalization of marijuana would also create more jobs for the people. By setting up marijuana dispensaries it would be the first course of action in the rise of employment which will add more economic benefits. According to Edward Shepard's, *Medical Marijuana and Crime: Further Evidence from the Western States.* "Journal of Drug Issues in Colorado, " marijuana legalization is the strongest economic driving force than ninety percent of other active industries" (par. 8). Increase in employment means the increase in tax and revenue for each state. The biggest benefit of legalizing marijuana would be the government's ability to tax the product. If marijuana was regulated by the FDA, the government would be able to regulate its production of marijuana for consumption in addition to taxing the drug like every other drug on the market. If legalized, it would be a product that would be available for purchase according to the state or government regulations. Legalizing marijuana would also help the government save on prohibition enforcement costs. In contrast, critics

believe that if marijuana is legalized it may not be as profitable to the economy. If it becomes legal more and more people would tend to grow their own without a license thus opting out of purchasing it from a retailer or licensed dispensary. Government officials would consider this a risk because marijuana would be sold on the black market. This factor plays a part in supply and demand. If people grew their own marijuana the supply would increase and the demand would decrease. Thus causing the market to dwindle and lower the projected tax and revenue percentage that the government would obtain from both sales and taxes. However, on the bright side, the government would eventually break even because the economy would be steadily booming. Which means that money would be going out but also coming in from everyday consumers.

The legalization of marijuana for medicinal purposes has lastly led to a significant decrease in violent crimes. The phenomena of drugs and crime are coexistent due to the assumptions that you can't have one without the other. Legalization of marijuana would reduce or eliminate crimes that are associated with distribution, possession, and cultivation. In addition to the economic increase that would take place if we legalized marijuana, we would additionally be reducing the amount of money that we spend on running overcrowded jails and prisons. Most arrests are made due to the involvement of marijuana. If marijuana was legalized, police arrests would decrease. The mere fact that many Americans are incarcerated due to marijuana-related offenses, it is clear to see that marijuana would certainly reduce crime rates. This would eliminate and change the statistics of marijuana-related offenses. This would also change the terminology of it being a "crime". Thus

eliminating crime involvement. Additionally, our country as a whole spends “\$68 billion a year on its prisoners, one-third of which are imprisoned for nonviolent drug crimes. About half of these criminals are marijuana offenders, which means one-sixth of our country’s prisoners are in jail for marijuana-related charges. Legalizing the drug would mean spending \$11.3 billion less a year on prisons” (Shepard). Most crimes happen because criminals tend to rob or assault to seek possession of this drug. However, by making marijuana legal, it makes it impossible for criminals to conduct crimes surrounding marijuana. Anti-marijuana protestors argue that if marijuana is legal there will be an increase in crime. The biggest concern from critics is that legalizing marijuana would still become a gateway for other illegal drugs. Legalization of marijuana and the need for other gateway drugs such as heroin and cocaine would open the doors of other crimes such as robbery and assault.

It is time that we finally legalize marijuana that’s only if government officials get off their high horse (pun intended). There is factual evidence that its biggest benefit is the health benefits. The first priority should be, we the people. Our health alone is a major factor. Additionally, it will only help the U.S. as we see the promises that it brings to health benefits, economic increase and decrease in criminal activities. These are all positive aspects that contribute to society. Although anti-marijuana protestors have their reasons for what it is that they believe, they should first see the significance that legalization brings to the human race. All while looking past the misconceptions and negative representations associated with this drug. The one good thing about this drug is that it will always be a choice. A choice for



the patient to whether or not they want to use this route for treatment.  
Marijuana will be legalized in the near future.