



New bill to legalize marijuana could be on MO 2012 ballot

The government spends roughly \$14 billion per year on prohibition

By **Ellen Sherman**

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No tags for this article.



Legalizing the illegal substance marijuana has been a hot topic for the past decade. A synthetic weed, K2, drug cartels and an increase in potency have put pressure on the government to construct a plan for legalization. Conversely, negative health associations and some law enforcement groups have put pressure on the government to continue the criminalization.

Today it is the top cash crop in the world, worth \$35 billion, beating out such staples as wheat and corn combined, according to an article on abc.com. In 2007, 14.4 million Americans ages 12 and older used marijuana at least once in the month prior to being surveyed, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Fourteen states have decriminalized cannabis and 17 have medical marijuana programs, including Washington, D.C. States are coming up quickly with their own view on the drug in order to appease the public, according to medicalmarijuana.procon.org.

In the federal sector, on June 23, 2011, a bill to fully legalize marijuana was introduced in the House by Ron Paul, R-Texas, and Barney Frank, D-Mass. The bill would remove marijuana from the controlled substances list.

The government has denied medical marijuana has any medical benefits, but they hold the patent for the medical use of the plant. U.S. Patent 6630507 is titled "Cannabinoids as antioxidants and neuroprotectants," an indication that the government recognizes the possible medical benefits in the drug.

According to Scott Lauher, MU National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws co-director, there are numerous positive effects to legalizing marijuana, but the main reason is because prohibition just doesn't work.

The government spends nearly \$14 billion each year on prohibition, according to the Marijuana Policy Project on Capitol Hill. In just two years time that would provide America with enough money to secure all loose nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union. Five-hundred and thirty economists agree the government is sitting aside, watching millions of dollars be wasted on marijuana prohibition.

If marijuana was legalized and taxed, Missouri alone could potentially collect \$15.6 million dollars in tax revenues in one year, according to an article on cnmnews.com. The state and federal governments are not only able to obtain funds through taxes, but from other sources as well.

Not only are there economists backing up the plans, but the country becoming more in favor of legalization than it was in the past. In a Gallup poll released in September 2011, 50 percent of Americans are now in support of legalization and regulation of the marijuana trade. When the ability to petition the government through the White House's official government website become live, the marijuana legalization petition was the first to post. Eighteen thousand signatures were received in just one day to decriminalize the widely-used drug.

Local lawyer Dan Viets has dealt with marijuana cases for the past 25 years and has proposed the two Initiative petitions relating to cannabis approved for circulation for the 2012 Missouri ballot.

"I'm in favor of it — I think it's insane to put otherwise law abiding people in jail for using, growing or selling marijuana," Viets said. "The pot smokers tend to not bother anybody."

Viets said he thinks the laws sending people his way are outrageous.

K2 creator John Huffman, who made millions of dollars off of his compound, believes marijuana should be legalized.

"You can't overdose on marijuana, but you might on (K2)," Huffman said. "These things are dangerous, and marijuana isn't, really."

Some health studies have shown marijuana to be associated with negative health effects.

According to Streetdrugs.org a marijuana joint contains 50 to 100 percent more tar than that of tobacco, therefore smoking just one joint is equal to smoking 7 to 10 cigarettes.

By legalizing marijuana, the general public could be exposed to yet another known carcinogen option, according to streetdrugs.org. Marijuana smokers could experience the same respiratory problems that tobacco smokers have due to the excessive amounts of tar.

Not only is the marijuana smoke harmful, but so are the chemicals. There are more than 400 chemicals in marijuana and some are known to affect your memory, sex drive and problem solving skills, according to the American Council for Drug Education.



Photo Illustration by Andrew Welch | According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health in 2007, 14.4 million Americans admitted to using marijuana at least once in the month prior to the survey. In addition, marijuana continues to be a top-earning cash crop, worth \$35 billion. [\(View large image browser\)](#)

Although some argue the legalization of marijuana will lead to less drug dealers, or harder times for cartels, it could actually lead them to focus on more dangerous trafficking in order to make up the lost income.

Antonio Martinez, attorney general for Northern Baja California from 2001 to 2007, said at the McGeorge School of Law symposium on marijuana and legal issues that sanctioning marijuana use in California would force cartels to increase other forms of drug trafficking.

Nationwide criminal networks coming from Mexico and China are fed by the illegal distribution and sale of marijuana, according to Sylvia Longmire of the New York Times. The drug provides a significant source of revenue to large-scale criminal enterprises, gangs and cartels. The Mexican cartel is almost completely fed by smuggling tons of marijuana over the border each year. Although legalizing marijuana may upset drug lords profiting off of the cannabis, it could lead the drug cartels into focusing on increasingly dangerous activities.

The following people could not be reached for comment: Mothers Against Drunk Driving Parents. The Anti Drug Columbia Police Department spokeswoman Latisha Stroer Wellness Resource Center assistant Director Kim Dude

Comments (7)

7:49 a.m., Nov. 15, 2011

cannibaslover said:

I feel it should be legal because it does nothing bad to your body. I think cigarettes should be illegal because they stink and u can get addicted to it.

1:42 p.m., Nov. 15, 2011

Turner Johnson said:

Yes! Here's hoping it happens and passes!

2:43 p.m., Nov. 15, 2011

Buzzby said:

The largest study ever conducted on smoking and lung cancer showed that marijuana is not a causative factor and even reduces cigarette smokers' incidence of the disease. The market for hard drugs is very limited. Most people have better sense than to get involved. The idea that the cartels could make up their 60% - 70% revenue loss by pushing hard drugs is ludicrous. The needs of that limited market are already being fulfilled. The idea that we should continue marijuana prohibition so the cartels won't focus on "increasingly dangerous activities" cracks me up. Let's continue to arrest 800,000 Americans every year because marijuana is more benign than cocaine. Really?

3:25 p.m., Nov. 15, 2011

Flutie said:

"By legalizing marijuana, the general public could be exposed to yet another known carcinogen option, according to streetdrugs.org. Marijuana smokers could experience the same respiratory problems that tobacco smokers have due to the excessive amounts of tar" This is a lie. Donald Tashkin, professor emeritus at UCLA, has been researching the effects of tobacco and marijuana smoke for 30 years and is the world's leading authority on the subject. In the largest longitudinal study ever conducted, he found that EVEN HEAVY MARIJUANA SMOKING CAUSES NEITHER CANCER NOR EMPHYSEMA. In fact, he found that incidents of cancer in even heavy marijuana smokers to be LESS THAN in the general non-smoking population - suggesting that cannabis has a protective effect.

4:33 p.m., Nov. 15, 2011

Nate said:

Regarding the assertion that marijuana is more harmful to the lungs than cigarettes, the latest studies suggest that there is no correlation between lifetime heavy use of cannabis and the incidence of lung cancer. Cannabinoids, the chemical compounds contained in the marijuana plant, in fact seem to have properties that combat the proliferation of cancer cells.

4:37 p.m., Nov. 15, 2011

kbpaintings said:

the bottom section is all propaganda. it sounds like our borders should be a bit tighter to huhhh?

5:23 p.m., Nov. 15, 2011

John said:

Good article. Well written. Gives both sides fair interest. I think the health risks are far less dangerous than what was listed, but even if they are true id rather have my friends see that than smoke risk getting caught and still have the health risks down the road, which there is no proof of marijuana hurting you long term. Find it and il change my position. Legalize Mizzou 2012!

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