

Top Ten Reasons for Cannabis to be Legalized

1. Prohibition has failed to control the use and domestic production of marijuana.



The government has tried to use criminal penalties to prevent marijuana use for over 75 years and yet: marijuana is now used by over 25 million people annually, cannabis is currently the largest cash crop in the United States, and marijuana is grown all over the planet. Claims that marijuana prohibition is a successful policy are ludicrous and unsupported by the facts, and the idea that marijuana will soon be eliminated from America and the rest of the world is a ridiculous fantasy.

2. Arrests for marijuana possession disproportionately affect blacks and Hispanics and reinforce the perception that law enforcement is biased and prejudiced against minorities.

African-Americans account for approximately 13% of the population of the United States and about 13.5% of annual marijuana users, however, blacks also account for 26% of all marijuana arrests. Recent studies have demonstrated that blacks and Hispanics account for the majority of marijuana possession arrests in New York City, primarily for smoking marijuana in public view. Law enforcement has failed to demonstrate that marijuana laws can be enforced fairly without regard to race; far too often minorities are arrested for marijuana use while white/non-Hispanic Americans face a much lower risk of arrest.

3. A regulated, legal market in marijuana would reduce marijuana sales and use among teenagers, as well as reduce their exposure to other drugs in the illegal market.

The illegality of marijuana makes it more valuable than if it were legal, providing opportunities for teenagers to make easy money selling it to their friends. If the excessive profits for marijuana sales were ended through legalization there would be less incentive for teens to sell it to one another. Teenage use of alcohol and tobacco remain serious public health problems even though those drugs are legal for adults, however, the availability of alcohol and tobacco is not made even more widespread by providing kids with economic incentives to sell either one to their friends and peers.

4. Legalized marijuana would reduce the flow of money from the American economy to international criminal gangs.

Marijuana's illegality makes foreign cultivation and smuggling to the United States extremely profitable, sending billions of dollars overseas in an underground economy while diverting funds from productive economic development.

5. Marijuana's legalization would simplify the development of hemp as a valuable and diverse agricultural crop in the United States, including its development as a new bio-fuel to reduce carbon emissions.

Canada and European countries have managed to support legal hemp cultivation without legalizing marijuana, but in the United States opposition to legal marijuana remains the biggest obstacle to development of industrial hemp as a valuable agricultural commodity. As US energy policy continues to embrace and promote the development of bio-fuels as an alternative to oil dependency and a way to reduce carbon emissions, it is all the more important to develop industrial hemp as a bio-fuel source – especially since use of hemp stalks as a fuel source will not increase demand and prices for food, such as corn. Legalization of marijuana will greatly simplify the regulatory burden on prospective hemp cultivation in the United States.

6. Prohibition is based on lies and disinformation.

Justification of marijuana's illegality increasingly requires distortions and selective uses of the scientific record, causing harm to the credibility of teachers, law enforcement officials, and scientists throughout the country. The dangers of marijuana use have been exaggerated for almost a century and the modern scientific record does not support the reefer madness predictions of the past and present. Many claims of marijuana's danger are based on old 20th century prejudices that originated in a time when science was uncertain how marijuana produced its characteristic effects. Since the cannabinoid receptor system was discovered in the late 1980's these hysterical concerns about marijuana's dangerousness have not been confirmed with modern research. Everyone agrees that marijuana, or any other drug use such as alcohol or tobacco use, is not for children. Nonetheless, adults have demonstrated over the last several decades that marijuana can be used moderately without harmful impacts to the individual or society.

7. Marijuana is not a lethal drug and is safer than alcohol.

It is established scientific fact that marijuana is not toxic to humans; marijuana overdoses are nearly impossible, and marijuana is not nearly as addictive as alcohol or tobacco. It is unfair and unjust to treat marijuana users more harshly under the law than the users of alcohol or tobacco.

8. Marijuana is too expensive for our justice system and should instead be taxed to support beneficial government programs.

Law enforcement has more important responsibilities than arresting 750,000 individuals a year for marijuana possession, especially given the additional justice costs of disposing of each of these cases. Marijuana arrests make justice more expensive and less efficient in the United States, wasting jail space, clogging up court systems, and diverting time of police, attorneys, judges, and corrections officials away from violent crime, the sexual abuse of children, and terrorism. Furthermore, taxation of marijuana can provide needed and generous funding of many important criminal justice and social programs.

9. Marijuana use has positive attributes, such as its medical value and use as a recreational drug with relatively mild side effects.

Many people use marijuana because they have made an informed decision that it is good for them, especially Americans suffering from a variety of serious ailments. Marijuana provides relief from pain, nausea, spasticity, and other symptoms for many individuals who have not been treated successfully with conventional medications. Many American adults prefer marijuana to the use of alcohol as a mild and moderate way to relax. Americans use marijuana because they choose to, and one of the reasons for that choice is their personal observation that the drug has a relatively low dependence liability and easy-to-manage side effects. Most marijuana users develop tolerance to many of marijuana's side effects, and those who do not, choose to stop using the drug. Marijuana use is the result of informed consent in which individuals have decided that the benefits of use outweigh the risks, especially since, for most Americans, the greatest risk of using marijuana is the relatively low risk of arrest.

10. Marijuana users are determined to stand up to the injustice of marijuana probation and accomplish legalization, no matter how long or what it takes to succeed.

Despite the threat of arrests and a variety of other punishments and sanctions marijuana users have persisted in their support for legalization for over a generation. They refuse to give up their long quest for justice because they believe in the fundamental values of American society. Prohibition has failed to silence marijuana users despite its best attempts over the last generation. The issue of marijuana's legalization is a persistent issue that, like marijuana, will simply not go away. Marijuana will be legalized because marijuana users will continue to fight for it until they succeed.

