

Students showing increased support for marijuana legalization

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Over the last five years, surveys have shown that an increasing number of college students believe that marijuana should be legalized. Students were surveyed in 2004 and 2009 with results showing an increase from 37.2% to 45.6% for those in favor of marijuana legalization.

One of the more active student groups supporting legalization is Students for Sensible Drug Policy. Students for Sensible Drug Policy is “an international grassroots network of students who are concerned about the impact drug abuse has on our communities, but who also know that the War on Drugs is failing our generation and our society”.

Students for Sensible Drug Policy have joined in a movement across college campuses in support of Proposition 19, California's legalization measure to be voted on in November. The aim of the challenge is to collect signatures in support of the legalization of marijuana which will later be sent to the President to let him know how popular the issue is among students. More than 1,000 college chapters are participating.

California voters will decide in November whether to legalize marijuana, and South Dakota and Arizona will be voting on the use of medical marijuana, which is already permitted in 13 other states (including California). (Regardless of the States, the Federal Government still considers the plant to be illegal).

The “War on Drugs”

The United States has more people in jail per capita than any other nation in the world, in large part because of the War on Drugs. The United States has 5 percent of the world's population, but nearly a quarter of the prisoners in the world. There are now about 480,000 drug offenders in jails and prisons, and about 50 percent of the federal prison population consists of drug offenders.

Since the founding of the DEA in 1973, 15 million Americans have been arrested for marijuana. Police prosecuted 858,408 persons for marijuana violations in 2009, according to the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Report. The arrest total is the second highest ever reported by the FBI. In 2007, the FBI reported 872,721 marijuana prosecutions in the United States, the highest total on record.

Research by Harvard economist Jeffery Miron shows that the legalization of marijuana would save approximately \$13.7 billion per year in government expenditure on enforcement of prohibition and would yield \$6.4 Billion per year in tax revenue.