

Alternatives? Yes! Legalization? No.

We should not be forced into a false choice between a war on drugs or legalization. An evaluation of the available research reveals that a number of evidence-based policies that protect the health and safety of users, their families, and the wider community are available. The legalization of alcohol and tobacco has been a global public health disaster - why would we go down the same road by legalizing additional addictive drugs? It is time to reject false dichotomies and to embrace a smarter approach.



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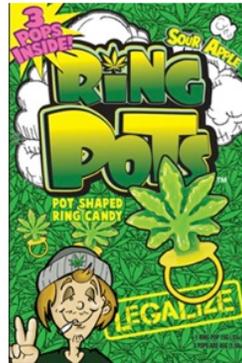
A Drug Policy Based on Evidence, Shared Responsibility, Public Health, and Public Safety Does Not Mean We Have to Succumb to a “War on Drugs” or to Legalization

There are commonsense approaches to drug policy, based on reputable science and principles of public health and safety, which reject both legalization and incarceration.

Legalization Would Increase Drug Addiction, Normalize Drug Use, and Enrich Big Corporations through Commercialization

Because they are accessible and available, our legal drugs are used far more than our illegal ones. According to UN and WHO estimates, 40% and 22% of the world use alcohol and tobacco, respectively, while only 4% use illegal drugs. Both alcohol and tobacco are the two leading causes of mortality and morbidity in the world¹, and in Latin America, alcohol is one of the leading risk factors.² We know, too, that the price of legal drugs will plummet, thus spiking demand. Corporations ready to profit from addiction will undoubtedly encourage increases in demand. For instance, the former head of Strategy for Microsoft has said that he wants to “mint more millionaires than Microsoft” with marijuana and that he intends to create the “Starbucks of marijuana.”³ Private holding groups and financiers have raised millions of start-up dollars to promote businesses that will sell marijuana and marijuana-related merchandise.

Already, marijuana foods and candies are marketed to children and are responsible for a growing number of marijuana-related hospital visits.⁴ Edible marijuana products with names such as “Ring Pots” and “Pot Tarts” are inspired by common children candy and dessert products such as “Ring Pops” and “Pop Tarts.” There is even evidence of Big Tobacco interests entering the marijuana business.



The market price of LEGAL marijuana can FALL by 80%⁵

FOR EVERY 10% DROP in PRICE

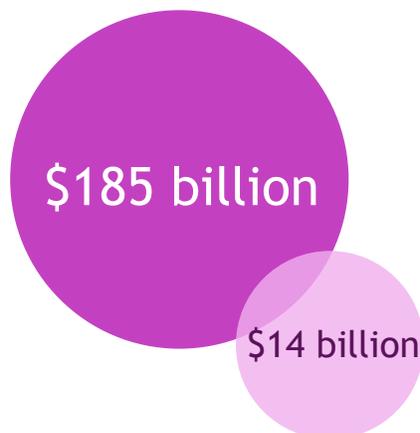
↑ CONSUMPTION RISES BY 5%⁶

All Drugs, Even Marijuana, Pose a Public Health Problem with Serious Consequences for Many Individuals

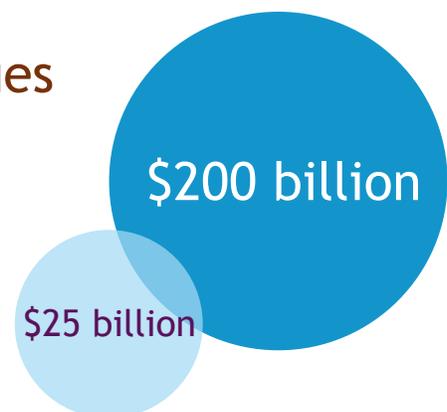
The scientific community is unequivocal in stating that drug addiction is a public health problem with serious consequences for the individual, family, community, workforce, and society as a whole. The American Medical Association, for example, recently passed a resolution stating that marijuana “is a dangerous drug and...a public health concern...[whose] sale should not be legalized.” The UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization, and many other respected groups have similarly concluded that drugs - including marijuana - are addictive, and acutely affect youth and vulnerable populations. Finally, it is well known that any tax revenue generated from the sales of legal drugs would likely be minuscule compared to the social costs incurred by increased drug use. **For every \$1 in alcohol and tobacco tax revenues, society loses \$10 in social costs, from accidents to health damage⁷.** The Lottery and other forms of gambling have not solved our budget problems, either.



ALCOHOL COSTS



TOBACCO COSTS



Revenues

Legalization Would Not Improve Security Nor Curb Criminal Organization Activity

A 2010 RAND report showed that Mexican drug trafficking groups received only a minority of their revenue from marijuana. For criminal organizations, the big money is found in other illegal trades such as human trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, piracy, and other illicit drugs.¹² We know from mining and other industries that illegal actors can easily infiltrate so-called legal industries. Legalization will only help cartels, masking their activities as legal and legitimate, while continuing to improve their profits with increasing demand.

We Have Better Alternatives - Let's Give Them A Chance

As discussed in the recent Organization of American States' report, *The Drug Problem in the Americas*, there are several security, prevention, treatment, and enforcement reform measures that countries could undertake in order to reduce the harm of both drugs and drug policy. For instance, community-based efforts focused on prevention have been successful in significantly reducing drug use.

"Let it be clear that no one here is defending any position, neither legalization, nor regulation, nor war at any cost. What we have to do is use serious and well-considered studies...to seek better solutions."

- José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS

Treatment programs in health care settings or even in justice settings (like drug treatment courts) also have a record of significantly reducing drug-related problems. We should also focus on the potential of non-drug policies to reduce drug-related consequences, like housing, education, and health care policies. Programs that tackle root problems, such as corruption, security, and poverty, should also be considered.

FOR EVERY
\$1 Invested in prevention efforts → **\$10** Are saved in treatment costs¹³

Notes:

¹ World Health Organization Media Center, retrieved from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs349/en/>

² Lim, et al. (2012). A comparative risk assessment of burden of disease and injury attributable to 67 risk factors and risk factor clusters in 21 regions, 1990-2010: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. *Lancet*, 380.

³ Ex-Microsoft exec plans 'Starbucks' of marijuana. (2013, May 31). *United Press International*. Retrieved from http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2013/05/31/VIDEO-Ex-Microsoft-exec-plans-Starbucks-of-marijuana/UPI-41161369985400/

⁴ Alfance, I. (2013, May 27). Children Poisoned by Candy-looking Marijuana Products. *Nature World News*. Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>; Jaslow, R. (2013, 28 May). Laxer marijuana laws linked to increase in kids' accidental poisonings *CBS News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-204_162-57586408/laxer-marijuana-laws-linked-to-increase-in-kids-accidental-poisonings/

⁵ Kilmer, B., et al. (2010). Altered State? Assessing How Marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets. *Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Updating estimates of the economic costs of alcohol abuse in the United States: Estimates, update methods, and data. Report prepared for the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Retrieved from <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/economic-2000/>; Urban Institute and Brookings Institution (2012, October 15). State and local alcoholic beverage tax revenue, selected years 1977-2010. *Tax Policy Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts/displayafact.cfm?Docid=399>; Saul, S. (2008, August 30). Government gets hooked on tobacco tax billions. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/31/weekinreview/31saul.html?em&_r=0; for Federal estimates, see Urban Institute and Brookings Institution (2012, October 15). State and local tobacco tax revenue, selected years 1977-2010. *Tax Policy Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts/displayafact.cfm?Docid=403>; Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (n.d.). Toll of tobacco in the United States of America. Retrieved from <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheet>

⁸ Anthony, J.C., Warner, L.A., & Kessler, R.C. (1994). Comparative epidemiology of dependence on tobacco, alcohol, controlled substances, and inhalants: Basic findings from the National Comorbidity Survey. *Experiential and Clinical Psychopharmacology*, 2.

⁹ Meier, M.H. (2012). Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

¹⁰ Mu-Chen, L. et al. (2012). Marijuana use and motor vehicle crashes. *Epidemiological Reviews*, 34(1).

¹¹ Hall, W. (2009). The adverse health effects of cannabis use: What are they, and what are their implications for policy? *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 20.

¹² Kilmer, B, Caulkins, J.P, Bond, B.M. & Reuter, P.H. "Reducing Drug Trafficking Revenues and Violence in Mexico: Would Legalizing Marijuana in California Help?" Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010. http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP325.

¹³ U.S. National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. Infofacts: Lessons from Prevention Research. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.