

In preparing for tonight's proceedings for the Committee of Whole's discussion of citywide cannabis decriminalization, I am sharing a few supportive links to articles for Council's view, as well as a copy of yesterday's Press Release covering tonight's proceedings.

The links I am sharing include informative articles supporting how cannabis is reducing opioid dependency nationwide, and how misdemeanor convictions can negatively affect one's opportunities, sending a less-motivated individual into a needless personal downward spiral.

After speaking with Councilperson Robinson, we determined it best that I share these informative links with you, and request that you share them with the whole of City Council.

Anything I have offered may be shared with the public.

We look forward to our discussions this evening, and are confident that the truth will guide each member of Council.

Jeffrey Riedy
Executive Director
Lehigh Valley NORML
610-533-0906

DR SANJAY GUPTA OPIOID

OPINION <http://www.cnn.com/2018/04/24/health/medical-marijuana-opioid-epidemic-sanjay-gupta/index.html>

LOWERING OPIOID USE <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/04/02/598787768/opioid-use-lower-in-states-that-eased-marijuana-laws>

<http://www.cnn.com/2018/04/29/health/medical-marijuana-opioids/index.html>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/tomangell/2018/04/02/legal-marijuana-states-have-lower-opioid-use-new-studies-show/>

STUDENT LOANS <http://www.aclu.org/other/injustice-101-higher-education-act-denies-financial-aid-students-drug-convictions>

HOUSING <http://affordablehousingonline.com/housing-help/I-Was-Denied-Assistance-For-Having-A-Marijuana-Charge-If-I-Move-To-A-State-Where-Marijuana-Is-Legal-Will-I-Be-Eligible>

PRESS RELEASE BELOW

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lehigh Valley NORML

Contact: Jeff Riedy 610-533-0906, lehighvnorml@gmail.com

Data charts included below

Data: Marijuana arrests soar in Allentown, Bethlehem as both cities consider decrim

Police in the Pennsylvania cities of Allentown and Bethlehem have arrested hundreds of residents for less than 30 grams of cannabis while opiate and cocaine arrests seem to be going down.

Last year Allentown put 315 people into handcuffs and the courts over marijuana possession, while the city reported just 31 other drug possession arrests during 2017, according to data from the Pa. Uniform Crime Reporting System.

Bethlehem police also favor arresting cannabis consumers, between 130 and 160 per year are caught up in the criminal justice system over a few joints. Data from Bethlehem is also showing some odd trends, with zero opiate or cocaine arrests logged in 2016 or 2017.

“Decriminalization would seem a simple and effective option anywhere,” said Lehigh Valley NORML director Jeff Riedy, “When you consider the human cost to those convicted of arrests for possession of small amounts of marijuana.”

A RAND Corp. study commissioned for Vermont found that each marijuana arrest is estimated to cost taxpayers \$1,266 to perform. Prosecuting each person spends another \$1,000 according to some estimates.

That means Allentown and Bethlehem spent over \$1 million last year treating otherwise law abiding cannabis consumers like criminals.

Thankfully the city councils in both communities have introduced ordinances to address this expensive injustice.

“The decrim ordinances, like that in Philadelphia, have helped to remove stigma, freed up the courts and allowed law enforcement to focus on more pressing issues. We should stop ruining lives over a joint,” said Riedy.

Lehigh Valley NORML encourages members of the press and elected officials to review the marijuana possession arrest data included with this release.

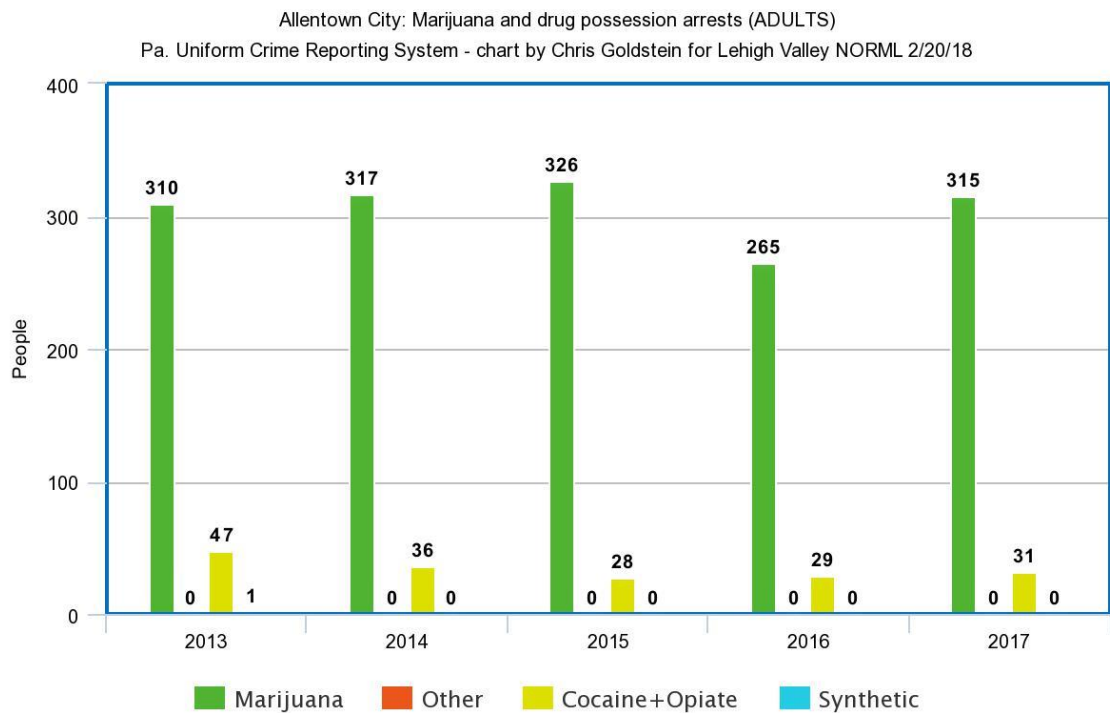
According to Pa. State Representative Michael Schlossberg (D., Lehigh), cosponsor of two statewide decriminalization bills in Harrisburg, “It’s time to put an end to senseless mass incarceration brought on by the prohibition of marijuana. I have added my name to legislation to decriminalize possession of marijuana and bring commonsense back to our criminal justice system. Pennsylvanian’s cannot afford to continue to follow the path of failed policies which hurt individuals and communities.”

Allentown introduced their ordinance at Council last week, and it has been moved to a *Committee of the Whole*, scheduled for Tuesday, May 8 at 6pm in Council Chambers. If it passes the Committee with a majority vote, the ordinance will move to the full City Council for a vote next Wednesday, May 16 at 7pm. Public opinion is encouraged both dates.

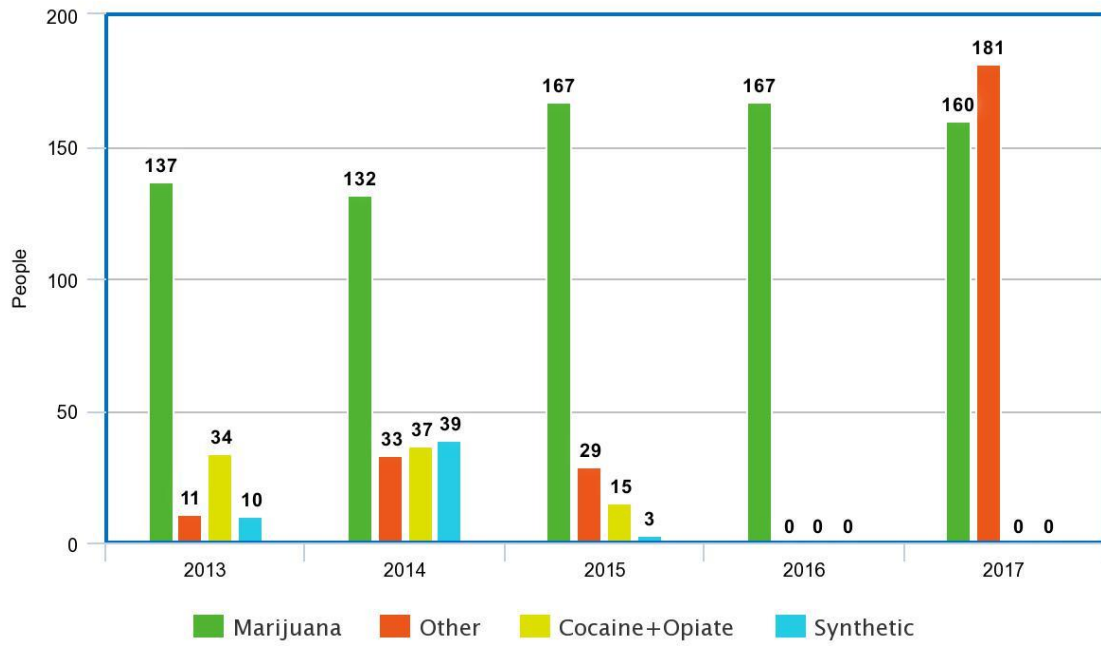
Allentown’s proposed ordinance:

<http://allentownpa.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6212844&GUID=F77277E0-5440-436B-B430-9CAC4AFFB0BD>

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Bethlehem City: Marijuana and drug possession arrests (ADULTS)
Pa. Uniform Crime Reporting System - chart by Chris Goldstein for Lehigh Valley NORML 2/20/18



meta-chart.com