

Top 10 Messages Against Legalization*

Emphasize the “Big Three”

1. **Legalization in Colorado has produced negative consequences** – pot gummy bears marketed to kids¹, more stoned people on the roads, and more positive workplace drug tests and overall marijuana prevalence.² As such, **the majority of localities in Colorado** have now **banned** sales.
2. **Marijuana legalization will usher in America’s new version of “Big Tobacco.”** Already, private holding groups and financiers have raised millions of start-up dollars to promote businesses that will sell marijuana and marijuana-related merchandise. The former head of Strategy for Microsoft has said that he wants to “mint more millionaires than Microsoft” with marijuana and that he wants to create the “Starbucks of marijuana.”³
3. **Today’s marijuana is not your Woodstock weed.** In the 1960s and ‘70s, THC levels of the marijuana smoked by baby boomers averaged around 1%, increasing to just under 4% in 1983, and almost tripling in the subsequent 30 years to around 14% in 2014.⁴

Other points:

A. **More on Colorado.** Highlights from 2014, when retail marijuana businesses began operating in Colorado, include, rapid changes in just one year after legalization[†]:

- 32% increase in marijuana-related traffic deaths in just one year from 2013
- Colorado youth usage (ages 12 - 17) ranks 56% higher than the national average
- 29% increase in the number of marijuana-related emergency room visits
- 38% increase in the number of marijuana-related hospitalizations
- Seizures of illegal Colorado marijuana increased another 34%

1. Marijuana is especially harmful to kids and adolescents.

- Marijuana contributes to psychosis and schizophrenia⁵, addiction for 1 in 6 kids who ever use it once⁶, and it reduces IQ among those who started smoking before age 18.⁷
- According to data from the 2012 National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse, **alcohol and cigarettes were the most readily accessible substances for youth 12 to 17**, with 50% and 44%, respectively, reporting that they could obtain them within a day. Youth were *least* likely to report that they could get marijuana within a day (31%); **45% report that they would be unable to get marijuana at all.**⁸

2. Marijuana use will increase under legalization

- **Because they are accessible and available, our legal drugs are used far more than our illegal ones.** According to recent surveys, alcohol use is used by 52% of Americans and tobacco is used by 27% of Americans. Marijuana is used by 8% of Americans.⁹
- When RAND researchers analyzed California’s 2010 effort to legalize marijuana, they concluded that the price of the drug could **plummet and therefore marijuana consumption could increase.**¹⁰

* Adapted from “Reefer Sanity: Seven Great Myths About Marijuana” by Dr. Kevin A. Sabet (Beaufort Books, 2013)

† See Rocky Mountain HIDTA Report, September 2014

3. Marijuana legalization will increase public costs.
 - **For every \$1 in alcohol and tobacco tax revenues, society loses \$10 in social costs, from accidents to health damage¹¹.** The Lottery and other forms of gambling have not solved our budget problems, either.
 - Few people are currently in prison for marijuana possession (in fact, only 0.1% of prisoners with no prior offenses¹²) and **current alcohol arrest rates are over three times higher than marijuana arrest rates.**¹³
4. People are not in prison for small time marijuana use.
 - Statistics on state-level prisoners reveal that **0.3% of all state inmates were behind bars for marijuana possession only** (with many of them pleading down from more serious crimes).¹⁴
 - 99.8% of federal prisoners sentenced for drug offenses were incarcerated for drug trafficking.¹⁵
 - The risk of arrest for each joint smoked is **1 in 12,000.**¹⁶
5. Drug cartels and the black market will continue to function under legalization.
 - A recent RAND report showed that **Mexican drug trafficking groups only received a minority of their revenue (15-25%) from marijuana.** For them, the big money is found in illegal trade such as human trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, piracy, and other illicit drugs.¹⁷
 - And we know from mining and other industries that illegal actors have a lot to do with so called legal industries. These cartels will only be helped with legalization and more addiction, not hurt.
6. Neither Portugal nor Holland provides any successful example of legalization.
 - Independent research reveals that in the Netherlands, where marijuana was commercialized and sold openly at “coffee shops,” **marijuana use among young adults increased almost 300%.**¹⁸ Now, the Dutch are retreated from their loose policies.
 - **There are signs that tolerance for marijuana in the Netherlands is receding.** They have recently closed hundreds of coffee shops, and today Dutch citizens have a higher likelihood of being admitted to treatment than nearly all other countries in Europe.¹⁹
 - In Portugal, use levels are mixed, and despite reports to the contrary, **they have not legalized drugs.** In 2001, Portugal started to refer drug users to three person “panels of social workers” that recommend treatment or another course of action. As the European Monitoring Center’s findings concluded: “the country does not show specific developments in its drug situation that would clearly distinguish it from other European countries that have a different policy.”²⁰
7. Marijuana has medicinal properties, but we shouldn’t smoke the plant in order to derive those benefits, just like we do not smoke opium to get the benefits of morphine.
 - In states with medical marijuana laws, the average user is a **male in his 30s with no terminal illness and a history of drug abuse.**²¹
 - **Less than 2% of users have cancer or AIDS.**²²
 - Residents of states with medical marijuana laws have abuse and dependence rates **almost twice as high as states with no such laws.**²³
 - Research should be conducted to produce pharmacy-attainable, non-smoked medications based on marijuana.
8. Experience from Colorado is not promising.
 - Two independent reports released in August 2013 document how Colorado’s supposedly regulated system is not well regulated at all.
 - Teen use has increased in the past five years. **Currently, the marijuana use rate among Colorado teens is 50% above the national average.**²⁴
 - Drug-related referrals for high school students testing positive for marijuana has increased.²⁵
 - Medical marijuana is easily diverted to youth.²⁶
 - While the total number of car crashes declined from 2007 to 2011, **the number of fatal car crashes with drivers testing positive for marijuana rose sharply.**²⁷

- ¹ 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/
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- 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 Mehmedic, Z., et al. (2010). Potency Trends of D9-THC and Other Cannabinoids in Confiscated Cannabis Preparations from 1993 to 2008. *The Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 55(5).
- ⁵ Andréasson S, et al. (1987). Cannabis and Schizophrenia: A longitudinal study of Swedish conscripts. *Lancet*, 2(8574).
- ⁶ 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.
- ⁷ Meier, M.H. (2012). Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
- ⁸ Adapted by CESAR from The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.casacolumbia.org/upload/2012/20120822teensurvey.pdf>
- ⁹ NSDUH, Summary of National Findings, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2012SummNatFindDetTables/NationalFindings/NSDUHresults2012.pdf>
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- ¹¹ 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>
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