

SHINE THE LIGHT OF TRUTH ON LEGALIZATION

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For thirty years, the marijuana legalization movement has aggressively promoted the false idea that the war on drugs is lost and the U.S. is doing nothing but locking up addicts and users. More insidious was their successful campaign to promote the idea that smoked marijuana is medicine which can treat and cure just about anything and everything but with little scientific evidence. This tactic — emotion and indulgence over knowledge and truth — has been successfully executed as evidenced by legislators in over 30 states that have enacted some type of “medical-marijuana” legislation absent any medical research or credible science. Emotions, opinions and outright false allegations now seem the root of public policy. Can we honestly survive that way?

Here is a spoiler alert: truth still matters. According to the scientific and medical communities, smoked marijuana is not medicine. The Institute of Medicine, American Society of Addiction Medicine, American Medical Association, American Cancer Society, American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Glaucoma Society, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology all agree that smoked marijuana is not medicine.

A major study published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* by researchers at Columbia University found that residents of states with medical marijuana had marijuana abuse and de-

pendence rates almost twice as high as states without such laws. Marijuana is now the number one reason young kids enter treatment — more than alcohol, cocaine, heroin, meth, ecstasy and/or other drugs *combined*.

To suggest that legalizing any illicit drug will have a positive impact on the safety and security of our society is illogical and mind-numbing. Researchers, social scientists, and law enforcement professionals have witnessed that as the perception of harm for marijuana or any drug decreases, there is a corresponding increase in use and abuse. A recent study of Colorado

and Washington states since passage of recreational marijuana legalization showed an alarming increase in rising rates of marijuana use by minors; increasing arrest rates of minors especially black and Hispanic; higher rates of traffic deaths from driving while high; higher rates of pedestrian deaths; more marijuana related poisonings and hospitalizations; and a thriving marijuana black market.

The data from schools, treatment clinics, emergency rooms, addiction measures, violent crime, marijuana movement to opiates, drugged driving and deteriorating public health are mounting. The question is, are we ready to return to truth? As a parent, former military officer, lifetime law enforcement officer, and American who loves his country, I hope so.

During my testimony before the Senate Drug Caucus in 2014, I made the statement that drug legalization in our country is reckless and irresponsible. Following my testimony, I received a copy of a letter that was sent to President Obama that declared my statement before the Senate “served no purpose other than to inflame passions and misinform the public.” I was taken back by how a callous disregard for the truth based on evidence can be dismissed by those who are sworn to uphold the Constitution and ensure that the next generation has an opportunity to be successful. Truth does matter, regardless of whatever political figures may say.

Sadly, we can no longer expect many of our legislators to have the safety and security of our children as a priority when it comes to making the right decision. In order for a civilized society to thrive, grow and survive, we must be willing to seek and utilize knowledge as a bright light that brings truth into focus.

In the Old Testament, we read how the tribes of Israel often fell away from their Godly standards and entertained the voices of false prophets which led to chaos, disorder and conflict. The Lord speaking through the prophet Micah invited the tribes of Israel to be reasonable and seek the truth and “do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). Justice, love and kindness are the intended consequences of living in a society that daily pursues knowledge that leads to truth. I hope that we will continue to be light-bearers in a dark world and willing to shine the light of truth in our daily walk. 

