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Weeding Out Marijuana

THE HIGH COST OF A POT HIGH

by Roger Morgan, Chairman/Founder, Take Back America Campaign

For almost 50 years at a cost of over \$1 trillion, America led the world's effort to combat illicit drugs. Tragically, we have forsaken that role to become a rogue nation in violation of three international treaties that require the criminalization of possession and production of cannabis/marijuana. Nine states and Washington, D.C. have legalized the recreational use of marijuana. California alone has over 50,000 outdoor cultivation sites that produce marijuana under the guise of medicine, while supplying over 60 percent of the entire U.S. marijuana black market, more than all the drug cartels combined.

Credit for this atrocity goes primarily to former President Barack Obama, who for eight years catered to George Soros by simply refusing to enforce federal laws. During that period, marijuana use increased roughly 50 percent from 15 to 23 million people, as Soros's net worth went from \$7 to \$27.3 billion.

Due to competition from home grown marijuana, the Mexican drug cartels shifted to heroin and overdose deaths increased from about 105 to 175 people a day. Overdose is not the only cause of death nor the only adverse consequence of drug abuse. The vast majority of abusers started their

drug journey with marijuana and the human, environmental, and economic costs are astronomical.

The Human Harms

Unlike alcohol or other drugs, marijuana is a fat-soluble toxin that remains in the body and brain for a month, compounding with each additional use. It was a harmful drug 50 years ago when the potency, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), was only ½ to 2 percent. Today the THC content ranges from about 25 percent in smoked form, to concentrates used in dabbing and vaping that range from about 50 to 99 percent, and the harms escalate accordingly.

Dabbing is inhaling the vapors from a concentrated form of marijuana made by an extraction method that uses butane gas. Dabs, also known as butane hash oil — which are sometimes called “budder,” “honeycomb” or “earwax” — are more potent than

conventional forms of marijuana because of the much higher concentrations of THC.

Vaping is the heating of cannabis without burning the leaves. The heat releases the active ingredients into a vapor that is then released into the air in a fine mist created by a vaporizer device. Since combustion does not occur, smoke is not created.



Marijuana can cause physical and structural changes to the developing brain for anyone under age 25 or even up to 30 years. Marijuana can shrink the hippocampus, which is the learning, memory, and cognition center of the brain. The

consequences are loss of IQ by as much as 8 points. It can cause psychotic breaks that lead to gruesome acts of violence, mass murders, and suicides. Marijuana elevates the chances of mental illness five times and suicide seven times. Seventeen percent of adolescents and nine percent of those 18 or older

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will become addicted. Marijuana can cause DNA damage that can cause birth abnormalities and neurological damage to the next four generations. Traffic deaths from marijuana impairment have doubled in states that have legalized marijuana for any use.

It does not bode well for the future of our country that 38 percent of college students consume cannabis, many of whom will become impaired, mentally ill, addicted, dependent on public support, incarcerated or headed to an early grave.

The Environmental Damage

Marijuana is a thirsty plant consuming 6 to 8 gallons of water per day during growing season. The 50,000 grow sites in California have drained streams and destroyed pristine eco systems. The plant's associated poisons, pesticides and fertilizers are killing massive amounts of wildlife, including the environmentally protected spotted owl that famously shut down the entire lumber industry. Sickeningly, lab tests have revealed that 93 percent of that marijuana is tainted with dangerous pesticides. One of the insecticides frequently used is carbofuron, which is banned in the U.S. since 1/8 teaspoon is sufficient to bring down a 300-pound bear! Cleaning up these sites requires hazmat gear and a labor force the size of the National Guard. The Mexican drug cartels are using our national forests as marijuana plantations that they guard with weapons making the forests no longer safe for people to enjoy.

In Calaveras County, California, 1,200 grow sites have devastated the land with toxins that seep into the soil threatening the watershed, which supplies 3.5 million people (www.silentpoison.com). The estimated cost of reclamation is as high as \$2 billion just for Calaveras County. Costs for the state could exceed \$50 billion.

The Economic Cost

Marijuana is the most frequently used illicit drug and gateway to all others. This drug use impacts law enforcement, physical health, mental illness, homelessness, education, welfare, and traffic accidents and could approach \$1.8 trillion per annum. Former President Reagan's "War on Drugs" reduced drug use by 50 percent, according to a study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The study revealed that in 1999, 14.8 million Americans used illicit drugs, while in 1979, there were 25 million users. Lowering drug use can save thousands of lives.

The Democratic Party's platform calls for a "reasoned pathway to future legalization" of marijuana, while the Republican platform is silent. Many Millennials favor legalization because they have been fed lies and propaganda for 20 years and do not know the harmful effects of legalizing marijuana. Many libertarians want freedom on the flawed premise that one can consume marijuana without having an adverse impact on others.

To make America great again, we need strong leaders with the knowledge, wisdom, and courage to stand against billionaires with evil intent, corrupt politicians, and the heavily financed illicit drug trade. Only the federal government has the resources to stop the societal chaos brought about by marijuana legalization. It is time to put the right people in place to get it done. Our future depends on it. 

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Last January, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions rescinded former President Obama's guidance documents that many interpreted as allowing states to legalize marijuana with minimal federal interference. In fact, marijuana remains illegal and is classified as a schedule 1 drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act of 1970, the strictest category and with criminal penalties attached.

The Obama administration took a soft approach to marijuana, essentially letting states legalize it as long as they met certain criteria, even though research suggests that marijuana legalization could lead to more use. Washington state was the first to legalize marijuana for recreational purposes in 2012, followed by eight more states and Washington, D.C.: Oregon, California, Nevada, Colorado, Alaska, Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Thirteen states have decriminalized, but not legalized, marijuana. Twenty-nine states have legalized it for medical purposes.

The Sessions memo revokes an earlier memo issued by former Deputy Attorney General James Cole. The Cole memo prevented the Drug Enforcement Agency from enforcing federal marijuana laws in states where the drug was legalized for recreational use and/or medical use. It stymied the DEA's ability to target marijuana traffickers who were able to exploit state law to manufacture and distribute marijuana.

Mr. Sessions explained that his new memo "simply directs all U.S. Attorneys to use previously established prosecutorial principles that provide them all the necessary tools to disrupt criminal organizations, tackle the growing drug crisis, and thwart violent crime across our country."



GRASS IS NOT GREENER

by Jeff Hunt, Vice President of Public Policy at Colorado Christian University.

Last year, Senator Cory Booker, (D-NJ), introduced the Marijuana Justice Act in an effort to legalize marijuana across the nation and penalize local communities that want nothing to do with this dangerous drug. This far-reaching marijuana legalization marks another sad moment in our nation's embrace of a powerful drug that will have generational consequences.

Our country is facing a drug epidemic. Legalizing recreational marijuana will not do what Senator Booker expects. We heard many of these same promises in 2012 when our state legalized recreational marijuana.

In the years since, Colorado has seen an increase in marijuana related traffic deaths, poison control calls, and emergency room visits. Contrary to predictions, the marijuana black market has increased, not decreased. Numerous state marijuana regulators have been indicted for corruption.

In 2012, we were promised that funds from marijuana taxes would benefit our communities, particularly schools. Dr. Harry Bull, the Superintendent of Cherry Creek Schools, one of the largest school districts in the state, said, "So far, the only thing that the legalization of marijuana has

brought to our schools has been marijuana."

In fiscal year 2016, marijuana tax revenue resulted in \$156,701,018. The total tax revenue for Colorado was \$13,327,123,798, making marijuana only 1.18 percent of the state's total tax revenue. The cost of marijuana legalization in public awareness campaigns, law enforcement, healthcare treatment, addiction recovery, and preventative work is an unknown cost.

Senator Booker stated his reason for legalizing marijuana is to reduce "marijuana arrests happening so much in our country, targeting certain communities — poor communities, minority communities." It's a noble cause to seek to reduce incarceration rates among these communities, but legalizing marijuana has had the opposite effect.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Safety, arrests in Colorado of black and Latino youth for marijuana possession have increased 58 percent and 29 percent respectively after legalization. More black and Latino youth are being arrested for marijuana possession after it became legal than beforehand.

A vast majority of Colorado's marijuana businesses are concentrated in neighborhoods of color. Leaders from these communities, many of whom initially voted to legalize recreational marijuana, often speak about the negative impact of these new businesses. Senator Booker released his bill just a few days after the *Washington Post* reported on a

study by the Review of Economic Studies that found "college students with access to recreational cannabis on average earn worse grades and fail classes at a higher rate." Getting off marijuana especially helped lower performing students who were at risk of dropping out. Since legalizing marijuana, Colorado's youth marijuana use rate is the highest in the nation, 74 percent higher than the national average, according to



the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Report. Legal marijuana has terribly negative effects on the education of our youth.

If Senator Booker is interested in serving poor and minority communities, legalizing marijuana is one of the worst decisions. There is much work to be done to reduce incarceration and recidivism, but flooding communities with more drugs will do nothing but exacerbate the problems.

The true impact of marijuana on our communities is just starting to be learned. The negative consequences of legalizing recreational marijuana will be felt for generations. I encourage Senator Booker to spend time with parents, educators, law enforcement, counselors, community leaders, pastors, and legislators before rushing to legalize marijuana nationally. We have seen the effects in our neighborhoods in Colorado, and we do not wish these problems upon the nation. 

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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. 

