



Top Ten Reasons to End Marijuana Prohibition by Taxing and Regulating Marijuana

- 1. Prohibition has failed — marijuana use is mainstream and widespread.** When the federal government first effectively prohibited marijuana in 1937, relatively few Americans had even heard of it. Today, according to government data, over 100 million Americans admit to having tried it (22.2 million in the last month), and every year, the Monitoring the Future survey finds that 4 out of 5 of high school seniors say marijuana is easy to obtain.
- 2. Prohibition is an immense waste of public resources, while marijuana taxation would bring in much-needed revenue.** A sample estimate conducted by the Congressional Research Service projected that replacing marijuana prohibition with a system of taxation and regulation would yield \$6.8 billion in excise taxes alone.
- 3. Arresting and prosecuting marijuana offenders prevents police from focusing on real crime.** In 2014 alone, the FBI reported more than 700,000 marijuana arrests and citations for marijuana — significantly more than for all violent crimes combined. Meanwhile, FBI data showed that less than half of violent crimes and only 20.2% of property crimes were cleared nationwide in 2014.
- 4. Prohibition sends an incredible number of Americans through the criminal justice system, ruining countless lives.** According to the FBI, since 1995, there have been more than 12 million U.S. marijuana arrests. Eighty-eight percent of these arrests were for possession – not manufacture or distribution.
- 5. Marijuana laws are enforced unevenly.** According to the ACLU, blacks are more than three times as likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than are whites, despite the fact that use rates among African Americans are proportional to use rates among whites. While marijuana users who were not convicted have gone on to be president or Supreme Court justice, a criminal conviction can stand in the way of securing a job; getting housing; or receiving a professional license, student loans, food assistance, a driver's license, a firearms permit, or the right to vote.
- 6. There is no evidence that imposing criminal penalties on marijuana use reduces its use.** The National Research Council found that “perceived legal risk explains very little in the variance of individual drug use.” In 2008, the World Health Organization found that in the Netherlands, where adults are allowed to purchase and possess small amounts of marijuana, both teen and adult marijuana use is significantly lower than in the U.S., where marijuana is illegal.
- 7. Prohibition makes control impossible.** Unlike licensed businesses in Colorado or Washington, illicit marijuana sellers operate virtually anywhere and have no incentive not to sell to minors. Prohibition guarantees that marijuana cannot be inspected for purity and potency, thus creating possible health hazards as a result of contamination by dangerous pesticides, molds, bacteria, or even the lacing of marijuana. Under regulation, producers and sellers must comply with zoning, health and safety, and other rules.
- 8. Marijuana prohibition breeds violence.** Currently, the only sellers of marijuana are criminals. As in 1920s Chicago, since disputes cannot be solved lawfully, violence is inevitable. According to Human Rights Watch, between 2006 and 2012, more than 60,000 people were killed in Mexican drug cartel-related violence. Those purchasing marijuana illegally also may face muggings and other violence.
- 9. Prohibition is bad for the environment.** Because marijuana cultivation is illegal, unlicensed, and carries felony charges, it often takes place in environmentally damaging locations such as national parks and wilderness areas. Under taxation and regulation, marijuana sales would be relegated to regulated, licensed businesses, which would cultivate in legally zoned areas.
- 10. Marijuana is safer than alcohol.** Unlike legal substances such as prescription opiates, alcohol, Tylenol, and even water, marijuana has never caused a single medically documented overdose death in recorded history. Alcohol causes hundreds of overdose deaths each year, and in 2013 (the latest year for which data is available), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 29,001 “alcohol-induced deaths.” The British government’s official scientific body on drug policy concluded that [legally regulated drugs] alcohol and tobacco are “significantly more harmful than marijuana.” It’s time to stop penalizing Americans who use the safer substance.