

Iowa should regulate marijuana like alcohol

Marijuana prohibition has been a costly failure for everyday Iowans.

Marijuana prohibition has been a costly failure. It's ending across America because it has caused far more harm than good. It has broken up too many families, upended too many livelihoods, thrown too many children into poverty and has taken a lifetime financial toll on otherwise law-abiding citizens.

In 2019, more than 5,000 Iowans were convicted of marijuana possession. Over the decades, tens of thousands of Iowans and their families have suffered irreparable economic and social harm from a criminal marijuana possession record. For too many, it has paved the way for a lifetime of economic insecurity.

Iowa taxpayers are on the hook for tens of millions annually for this failure. They pay twice as they pick up an enormous financial tab for an unfair policing and criminal justice system and the cost of the social safety net to support thousands of families that deal with the economic turmoil resulting from a criminal record.

While legalization will bring its own set of challenges, they will be less harmful to Iowans than marijuana prohibition.

Enforcement of marijuana laws are inherently biased

Since their inception decades ago, Iowa's marijuana laws have not been equally or fairly enforced. According to a recent ACLU study, a Black man in Iowa is almost 8 times more likely to get arrested for marijuana than a White man even though their usage rates are the same.

Taxpayers have bankrolled this costly failure that has disproportionately targeted Black Iowans and their families. A law that cannot be enforced equally is an unfair law and erodes trust in our justice system.

Marijuana is objectively less harmful than alcohol

Researchers have consistently concluded that marijuana is less toxic than alcohol, it has less potential for addiction, and it is less likely to contribute to serious medical problems. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports more than 30,000 alcohol-induced deaths per year, including more than 2,000 from acute overdose. It reports zero marijuana-induced deaths each year and there has never been a verified marijuana overdose death in history. Adults should not be punished for making the safer choice to use marijuana instead of alcohol, if that is what they prefer. To be clear, some people will have trouble with marijuana. Like alcohol, it can be addressed as a behavioral health problem rather than a criminal justice issue.

Legalizing marijuana creates jobs and generates state and local revenue

Legalizing adult use of marijuana in Iowa will create an estimated 4,000-7,000 new jobs across the state and will increase revenue for the state and local governments. It is estimated that new revenue would be in the range of \$60 to \$100 million annually.

Legalization has not resulted in an increase in teen marijuana use

<https://www.mpp.org/issues/legalization/teen-marijuana-use-does-not-increase/>

Legalizing marijuana for adult use will undermine the illicit market

Regulating marijuana for adult use will undermine the illegal underground market for marijuana. A commerce system that is profitable, unregulated, untaxed and criminal. Regulation allows for control. Unlike licensed businesses in states that regulate cannabis, illicit marijuana sellers operate virtually anywhere and have no incentive not to sell to minors.

Fifteen states now regulate marijuana like recreational alcohol

Fifteen states, the home to 1 out of 3 Americans now regulate the use of marijuana for adult use. The states include -- Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont and Washington and the District of Columbia have all legalized adult use (21 years of age) of marijuana.

Regulated marijuana has come to the Midwest

In November 2020, South Dakota voters approved legal marijuana for adult use. South Dakota joins Illinois and Michigan in doing so.

Fifty-three percent of Iowans support regulating marijuana like alcohol - March 2020

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2020/03/15/iowa-poll-iowans-support-legal-recreational-expanded-medical-marijuana/5026342002/>