

DEMOCRATS AND MARIJUANA

Is it time for Democrats to take the lead in ending prohibition?

A Wall Street Journal/NBC poll reported in January 2014 that 55 % of Americans want marijuana to be taxed and regulated like alcohol and tobacco. Gallup, Pew, Rasmussen and other polling organizations have reported similar results.

With any other issue getting that kind of public support, politicians would be climbing over each other to at least stake some kind of middle ground, but many politicians fear to touch it least they incur the wrath of the police/drug war/industrial complex.

Yet, this is an issue of immense importance. American taxpayers fork over \$20 billion every year entangling over 850,000 Americans in the criminal justice system. There are tens of thousands of murders taking place along our border with Mexico and much of it has to do with smuggling marijuana into this country. What other issue impacts so many Americans at such a staggering cost in dollars and lives and is so completely sidelined by not only timid politicians, but a complacent media?



As for health concerns – pain relief, depression mitigated, a truly good night’s sleep, a substitute for alcohol – cannabis has been used for over 5,000 years safely and effectively. With up to 1/3 of our returning vets from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering with PTSD, cannabis offers the safest and most effective treatment without any of the deleterious side effects associated with the prescription pharmaceuticals so liberally dispensed at every VA facility.

In May 2012 a bill that would greatly benefit medical marijuana patients passed the California State Assembly 41 to 28. Every vote in favor was cast by a Democrat – not one Republican supported medical marijuana patients. Also in May, in a vote to defund the Department of Justice from conducting raids against medical marijuana providers, 72% of the Democrats in the House of Representatives voted to stop the raids. Only 11% of the Republicans voted to stop the raids.

Democrats support marijuana law reform and the club has been formed to work within the Democratic Party to encourage and support Democrats who nurture marijuana policy reform based on compassion and common sense.

The club is named after the legendary Brownie Mary, the moniker given to Mary Jane Rathbun who, when she was in her 70s, began making marijuana infused brownies and even after being arrested three times, continued to distribute them to AIDS patients in San Francisco hospitals.



The Brownie Mary Democratic Club is such an appropriate name. It bespeaks the seriousness of the health and medical benefits of cannabis and yet it sounds light hearted and fun – which of course is what this serious medicine happens to be.

The Brownie Mary Democratic Clubs of Alameda, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino and San Francisco Counties are the first marijuana clubs ever affiliated and chartered by a major political party. Club members work within their local Democratic Central Committees to promote the Democratic Party, help Democrats get elected and form coalitions to protect the rights of medical marijuana patients, end marijuana prohibition and reform our nation’s inhumane, racist and ineffective drug laws.

In an interview in the New Yorker magazine, President Obama recognized that marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol “in terms of its impact on the individual consumer” and noted that **“It’s important for [marijuana law reform] to go forward because it’s important for society not to have a situation in which a large portion of people have at one time or another broken the law and only a select few get punished”**



This is an issue that will bring a significant number of independent and young voters to the Democratic Party. With the passage of marijuana legalization initiatives in Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, Washington and Washington D.C., there is concrete proof backing up multiple opinion polls showing the majority of Americans now support the legalization of marijuana. The quickest most effective way to make that happen is through our political party system and the Democrats are the party that can and will do it.



Reasons the 2014 Democratic Platform Plank to “Support the legalization, regulation and taxation of marijuana, in a manner similar to that of tobacco or alcohol” makes sense.

1. Prohibition has failed to control the use and production of marijuana, eroded civil liberties, corrupted police and wasted scarce federal, state and local tax dollars.
2. Arrests for marijuana disproportionately affect blacks and Hispanics. With cannabis accounting for roughly half of total drug arrests, legalization would sharply reduce this egregious disparity.
3. Would improve U.S. foreign policy in Latin America and other countries where Washington’s drug war has long strained diplomatic relations.
4. Eliminate a major source of funding for criminal gangs and terrorist organizations.
5. Provide a significant new source of revenue for schools, health care and other government services.
6. Provide a safer alternative to alcohol for relaxation, socialization and celebrations.
7. Create tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of new well-paying union jobs as is being developed and supported by the United Food and Commercial Workers union.
8. Allow a new valuable crop for American farmers for the production of hemp for fiber, food, fuel and many other commercial and industrial uses.
9. Marijuana is not a gateway drug, has a low risk of abuse and no one has ever died from an overdose or any disease associated with its use.
10. Reestablish its documented 5,000 year use as a medicine to relieve pain, fight cancer, facilitate sleep, slow aging, mitigate movement disorders, modulate auto-immune inflammatory diseases and provide safe therapeutic relief for a host of other disabling ailments.

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