Marijuana Legalization in Iowa: Just the Facts

Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy

www.Iowa.Gov/ODCP

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Legal & Federal Positions on Marijuana

- Iowa law classifies marijuana as a Schedule I Controlled Substance (high potential for abuse and no accepted medical value).
- Marijuana is outlawed by most other states and the federal government.
- The Obama administration "steadfastly opposes legalization of marijuana and other drugs because legalization would increase the availability and use of illicit drugs, and pose significant health and safety risks to all Americans, particularly young people."

Scientific Positions on Marijuana

- Using the rigorous ongoing scientific scrutiny applied to all new medicines, to ensure safety and efficacy, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved marijuana as medicine. The FDA says "there is currently sound evidence that smoked marijuana is harmful."
- The Institute of Medicine has declared that smoking marijuana is unsafe, and "marijuana is not modern medicine."
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports "marijuana is addictive," and that nearly 4.5 million Americans meet the clinical criteria for marijuana abuse or dependence.

Health Group Positions on Marijuana

- Major public health organizations—including the American Cancer Society, American Glaucoma Foundation, National Pain Foundation, National Multiple Sclerosis Society and others—do not support smoked "medical" marijuana.

- The American Medical Association calls for more marijuana research, saying its position should not be viewed as an endorsement of state-based medical cannabis programs…"

Claims of Pro-Legalization Supporters

- Medicalize marijuana…because marijuana can be used to help treat people for a wide range of chronic health conditions.

- Decriminalize marijuana…because current laws overcrowd prisons and unfairly make criminals out of marijuana users.

- Legalize marijuana…because controlling it as illegal is too costly for taxpayers, and legalizing it would create an infusion of tax revenues.

Important Questions

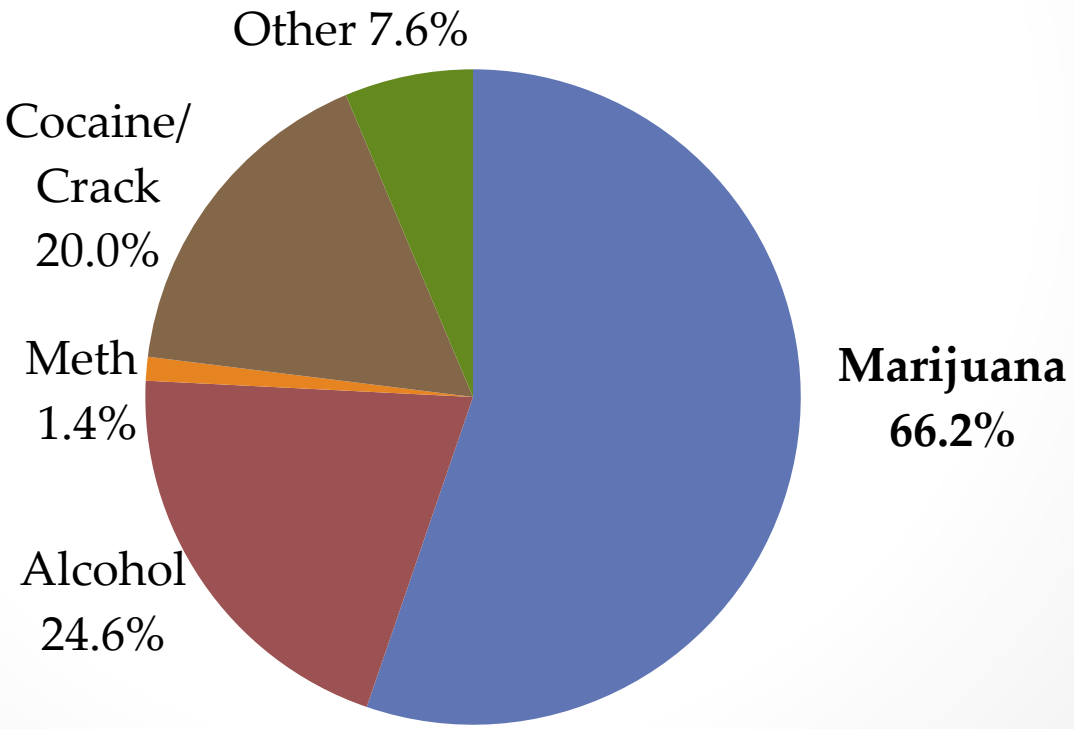
- What are the facts, and who's the source?
- Who pays for pro-marijuana legalization efforts, and why?
- What are possible unintended consequences?
- How would marijuana use by others (e.g., doctors, police officers, firefighters, engineers, attorneys, accountants, legislators, teachers, coaches, clergy, day care providers, workers in safety-sensitive positions, motorists, etc.) impact public safety?
- Is it good for the children?

"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Health

- More U.S. citizens met the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic criteria for marijuana abuse or dependence than for pain relievers, cocaine, tranquilizers, hallucinogens and heroin combined. 2011 U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use & Health
- Marijuana is Iowa's most used illicit drug, though a vast majority don't use it. 6% of Iowa 6th, 8th and 11th graders, and 4.5% of all Iowans age 12 and older currently use marijuana. 2010 Iowa Youth Survey/2008-2009 National Survey on Drug Use & Health
- The proportion of Iowa adults entering substance treatment primarily due to marijuana use has reached its highest point in 20 years – 22.8%. 2012 Iowa Department of Public Health

"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Health

- The proportion of Iowa juveniles entering substance treatment primarily due to marijuana use has reached its highest point in 20 years – 66.2%. 2012 Iowa Department of Public Health



"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Health

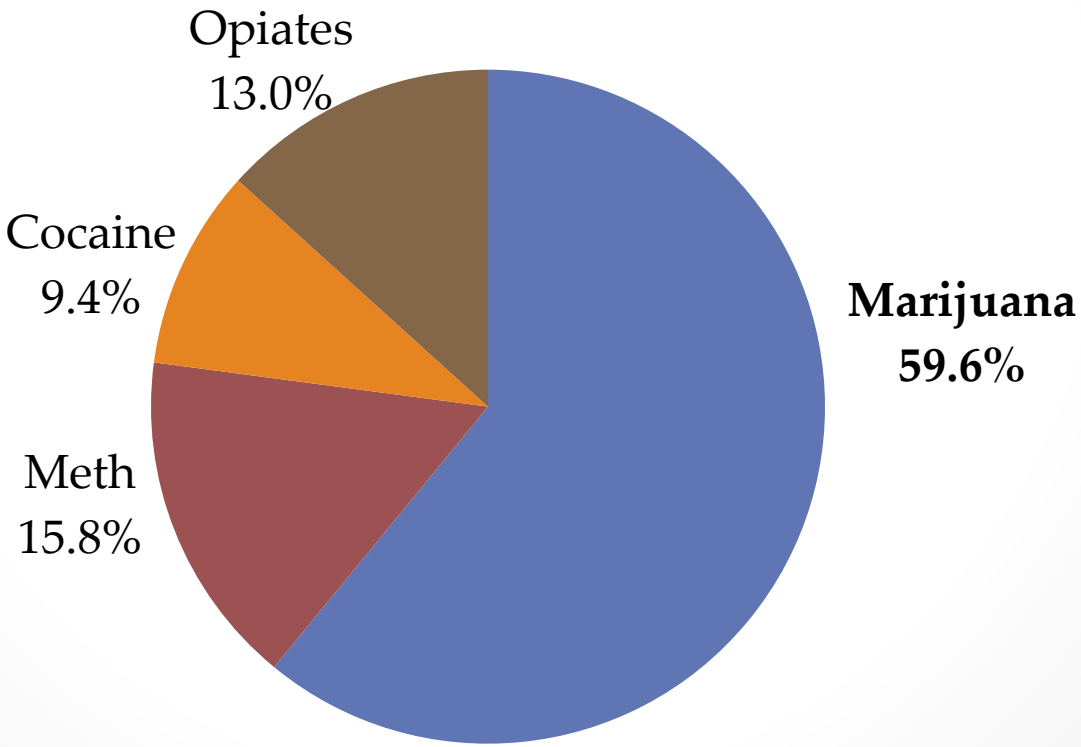
- Marijuana is the 2nd leading substance for which Americans receive drug treatment and a major cause for visits to emergency rooms. 2010 U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set
- Marijuana was involved in nearly 39% of all U.S. emergency department visits involving illegal drugs. 2010 U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, Drug Abuse Warning Network
- Studies reveal that marijuana potency has almost tripled over the last 20 years. 2010 Journal of Forensic Sciences, Vol. 55, No. 5
- Marijuana sold in dispensaries as medicine is the same quality and carries the same health risks as marijuana sold on the street. July 2012 National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, Drug Facts

"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Productivity

- About 9% of users become addicted. Marijuana use can increase rates of anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and respiratory ailments. 2010 National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, Info Facts
- Heavy marijuana use can impair physical and mental health, cognitive abilities, social life and career status. 2010 National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, Info Facts
- Worker marijuana use is associated with more absences, tardiness, accidents, workers' comp claims and turnover. Those testing positive for marijuana had 55% more accidents, 85% more injuries and 75% more absenteeism. 2010-2011 National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, Research Report Series
- (Note: Iowa drug-related traffic fatalities in 2011 reached a 5-year high of 29, double the previous two years. 2011 Iowa Department of Transportation & Public Safety)

"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Productivity

- 59.6% of + Iowa workplace drug tests were for marijuana.
  2002-2008 Iowa Department of Public Health



"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Youth

- Teen past-month heavy marijuana users in the U.S. are more likely than teens who have not used marijuana in the past year to: use cocaine/crack (30x); use Ecstasy (20x); abuse prescription pain relievers (15x); and abuse over-the-counter medicines (14x). 2012 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study

- Anti-marijuana attitudes among U.S. teens have eroded, with about half (51% vs. 61% in 2005) saying they see "great risk" in using marijuana. 2012 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study

- Increased availability and acceptability of marijuana would likely lead to increased consumption of the drug. 2010 Rand Corporation

"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Youth

- 6.5% of high school seniors nationally smoke marijuana daily, up from 5.1% five years ago. 2012 Monitoring The Future Survey-University of Michigan
- Past month marijuana use increased 14.2%-17% among 10th graders and 18.8%-22.9% among 12th graders. It's the highest point for high school seniors since the late 1990's, and coincides with only 20.6% of them seeing occasional marijuana use as harmful, the lowest perception of risk since 1983. 2012 Monitoring The Future Survey-University of Michigan
- The rate of past month marijuana use by America's 8th, 10th and 12th graders exceeds cigarette smoking in all three grade levels. 2012 Monitoring The Future Survey/University of Michigan

"Medical Marijuana" & Iowa Youth

- Marijuana use negatively effects motivation, memory and learning. 2011 National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, Facts Parents Need to Know

- Persistent marijuana use during adolescence can cause a long-term 8-point drop in IQ, and harm attention span and memory. 2012 National Academy of Sciences, Dunedin Study

- "IQ is a strong determinate of a person's access to college education, getting a job, performance on the job and tendency to develop heart disease. So those individuals who lose IQ points may be disadvantaged toward the most important aspects of life." Dunedin Study lead author & Duke University researcher, Madeline Meier

"Medical Marijuana:" A Case Study

- Very few California "medical marijuana" users have cancer, HIV/AIDS, glaucoma or multiple sclerosis. The average user is 32 years of age, and 87.9% tried marijuana before age 19. 2011 Journal of Drug Policy Analysis. 2007 O'Connell, T., Harm Reduction Journal
- Oregonian "medical marijuana" users cite severe pain 65% of the time vs. 5% reports of cancer, glaucoma and HIV/AIDS combined. October 2012 Oregon Health Authority
- Nearly 40% of Colorado's "medical marijuana" users are 12-34 years of age. 94% of all users cite severe pain. 2011 Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
- Colorado drivers in fatal car crashes testing positive for marijuana doubled 2006-2010. 2010 Colorado Department of Transportation

"Medical Marijuana:" A Case Study

- 48.8% of adolescents surveyed in a Denver drug treatment program obtained marijuana from a "medical marijuana" user. 2011 Drug Alcohol Dependency, Thurstone
- Denver has 204 "medical marijuana" dispensaries, roughly 3 times the number of Starbucks and McDonald's combined. 2012 CBS' 60 Minutes
- Residents of states with "medical marijuana" laws had marijuana abuse/dependence rates almost twice that of other states. In another study, marijuana usage rates among youths age 12-17 were higher in "medical marijuana" states (8.6%) vs. other states (6.9%). 2012 Cerda. M., Drug & Alcohol Dependence. 2011 Wall, M., Annals of Epidemiology

"Medical Marijuana:" Safer, More Effective Alternatives

- A few orally-administered individual *components* of the cannabis plant do contain active ingredients with therapeutic potential to relieve pain, control nausea, stimulate appetite and decrease ocular pressure.

- Dronabinol (Marinol) and Nabilone (Cesamet) are FDA-approved and legally available as prescription pills. The FDA is considering a mouth spray (Sativex) containing two synthetic cannabinoids.

"Medical Marijuana:" Safer, More Effective Alternatives

- Many other FDA-approved medicines, currently available in dose-specific forms that do not involve marijuana, are prescribed and dispensed regularly by health care professionals as effective treatment for similar health conditions.

- Research continues on cannabinoids, and many other substances, to determine if they may be formulated for beneficial and safe medical use (e.g., aspirin from tree bark and penicillin from moldy bread).

Decriminalization & Iowa Safety

- Few people are in state or federal prison for marijuana crimes, particularly possession offenses. The most recent national survey of state prison inmates shows 6% were drug possession offenders and 4.4% were drug offenders with no prior sentences. 2008 White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

- Of all Iowa prison admissions last year, 5% were primarily for drug possession, 2.3% for marijuana possession, and 0.17% for 1st-time marijuana possession. Many marijuana offenders admitted to Iowa prison had prior convictions and/or probation revocations. 2012 Iowa Division of Criminal & Juvenile Justice Planning

Decriminalization & Iowa Safety

Maximum marijuana possession penalties under Iowa law:

- 1st offense = serious misdemeanor, up to a $1,000 fine and 6 months in jail.
- 2nd offense = serious misdemeanor, up to a $1,875 fine and 1 year in prison.
- 3rd offense = aggravated misdemeanor, up to a $6,250 fine and 2 years in prison.
- (Note: Marijuana possession cases frequently result in deferred judgments and a civil penalty of $315. Courts may, and often do, suspend all or part of jail sentences.)

Decriminalization & Iowa Safety

- Of 3,571 total Iowa prison admissions last year, 6 involved 1st-time marijuana possession as the most serious offense. 2012 Iowa Division of Criminal & Juvenile Justice Planning
- In a random sampling of 100 drug offenders admitted to Iowa prisons whose primary drug was marijuana:
  - 63% were for trafficking offenses, 20% for possession offenses and 17% for other offenses.
  - 93% had at least one prior criminal conviction (at least 80% had prior felony convictions).

  2012 Iowa Division of Criminal & Juvenile Justice Planning
- 63.6% of Iowa substance abuse treatment referrals are via the criminal justice system. 2012 Iowa Department of Public Health

Marijuana Legalization: Other Issues

- Marijuana legalization would not eliminate the black market. Legalization means price comes down, the number of users goes up, the underground market adapts, and any revenue gained through new taxes most likely would not keep pace with the financial and social cost of making the drug more accessible. 2012 White House Office of National Drug Control Strategy
- Taxes on marijuana would never pay for the increased social costs that would result from more users. Our nation's experience with alcohol and tobacco shows that for every dollar gained in taxes, we spent 10 on social costs. 2009 Lancet, Global Burden of Disease and Injury & Economic Costs Attributable to Alcohol Use

Marijuana Legalization: Other Issues

- Legalization would not curb drug-related violence. Marijuana accounts for only a portion of proceeds gained by criminal organizations profiting from heroin, cocaine and meth distribution, human trafficking, other crimes, and the marijuana trade. 2012 White House Office of National Drug Control Policy
- Outdoor marijuana cultivation sites are becoming increasingly common. These "grows" often result in the destruction of natural habitat from diesel spills, pesticide runoff and trash from cultivators. 2010 National Drug Intelligence Center
- Recent eradication efforts in Iowa indicate an increase in the number of marijuana grows, including more plants seized in FY 2013 (5,813). 2012 Iowa Department of Public Safety

ODCP Position on Marijuana

- The consensus of available scientific research does not support a lessening of current Iowa marijuana controls.
- Increasing access to, and sending mixed messages about, marijuana will put more Iowa youth at risk and lead to more addiction and other drug-related problems.
- The Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy supports additional research into the cannabis plant's many components, but opposes marijuana legalization in any form because of the negative health, safety and economic effects it would have on Iowans.