Marijuana and its Impact

Criminalizing Marijuana Costs North Carolina Taxpayers

Between 2001-2010, North Carolina and its counties spent $55 million on courts, prisons and enforcing marijuana laws, **$6 million annually**, based on Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program. More than 8 million people were arrested of which 88% were for simple possession. From 2001 to 2010 there was a 188% increase in the number of arrests.¹

Employment

**Economic Self-Sufficiency Policy Research Institute** found that reducing criminal penalties for marijuana offenses is associated with increased probability of employment, particularly for young males, and an average increase of 4.5 percent in weekly earnings.²

Criminalized Less than 100 Years Ago Against AMA Recommendation

The liberty to use marijuana was halted with the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937.³ The American Medical Association opposed restricting access to marijuana Dr. William C Woodard testified that the Act would deprive US citizens benefits of a drug of substantial value.⁴ He countered the claims that marijuana resulted in addiction, violence, and overdoses. “The burden of this bill is placed heavily on the doctors and pharmacists of this country.”

The American pharmacopoeia listed marijuana as a useful drug for the treatment of numerous afflictions such as neuralgia, tetanus, typhus, cholera, rabies, anthrax, leprosy, tonsillitis, dysentery, insanity, and excessive menstrual and uterine bleedings.⁵ As far back 2459-2203 BCE archeologists found evidence of marijuana used for medicinal purposes.⁶

Individual Liberty

The conservative Reason Foundation reviewed marijuana data and concluded that “the evidence suggests that legalization of marijuana for medical or recreational use reaffirms individual liberty” without harming the public. In fact legalization has potential medical benefits and appears to reduce crime and traffic deaths.⁷

Contrary to Myths - Legalization Actually Reduces Criminal Activity

The **Economic Journal** reported legalizing medical marijuana in states bordering Mexico led to significant reductions in homicides and aggravated assaults. Apparently the demand for marijuana smuggled illicitly
from Mexico reduced the “activity of Mexican drug trafficking organizations and affiliated gangs, along with the violence these organizations use to maintain control of the market.” Individuals seem to substitute marijuana for opiates and other drugs and “appears to be associated with a reduction in drunk driving.”

The American Journal on Addiction published a longitudinal assessment of U.S. FBI data revealing that in states with medical marijuana legalization the crime rates decreased.

**Reduced Opioid Use in States with Legal Cannabis**

The Journal of American Medical Association reported that legalized adult-use of marijuana is associated with a 6.38% lower rate of opioid prescribing among Medicaid enrollees.

A study funded by the National Institute of Health found that over a 6-year period that “states with medical cannabis laws had a 24.8% lower opioid overdose mortality rate. Each subsequent year further reduced opioid overdoses of 20% in the 1st year down to 33% in the 6th. Secondary analyses found similar results.

**Vehicle Accidents Unaffected**

American Journal of Public Health found that vehicle crash fatality rates for Washington and Colorado were similar to those for the control states vs. states with recreational marijuana legalization. Three years after recreational marijuana legalization, changes in motor vehicle crash fatality rates were not statistically different from those in similar states without recreational marijuana legalization.

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4. Medical use of Marijuana-History 
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