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## Stupid is... Marijuana bill could stymie other drug epidemics

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“Are you stupid or sumpin’?”

A famous and often repeated question asked of Forest in the movie *Forest Gump* is a question we should be asking ourselves when it comes to getting a handle on our drug problems.

Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky are all in the midst of a heroin/prescription pain medicine crisis and a recent report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shows a 25 percent drop in opioid overdose deaths, (deaths from heroin and prescription pain medicine), in the first year after a State passes a medical marijuana bill. This percentage grows to 33 percent by the sixth year after passage. A Cato Institute report shows a 5 percent drop in suicides in the first year after passage.

Twenty years of the citizens of California accessing marijuana for medical uses has failed to produce any of the predicted harms we have been told for 79 years would happen if marijuana were legal for any reason.

This, coupled with the drop in overdose deaths and suicides certainly supports the concept of marijuana as a safer alternative to other more dangerous drugs both legal and illegal.

With all this in mind one finds it incomprehensible that the legislators of these states are not seriously working on the passage of a medical marijuana bill as fast as possible. Never mind the millions in revenue or the tens of thousands of jobs, hundreds of lives depend on the passage of a comprehensive marijuana bill in these states.

Let's consider the actual numbers for these three states.

Kentucky, in 2014, reported 1,077 opioid overdose deaths — 269 of these would not have happened. Kentucky also reports 701 suicides for 2015 — 35 of these would not have happened.

Indiana, in 2014, reported 1,172 opioid overdose deaths — 293 of these would not have happened. Indiana also reported 944 suicides for 2015 — 47 of these would not have happened.

Ohio, in 2014, reported 2,744 overdose deaths — 686 of these would not have happened. Ohio also reported 1,526 suicides for 2015 — 76 of these would not have happened.

In plain terms, had a medical marijuana bill been passed in these states, 1,406 of our fellow citizens would still be alive today!

How do we morally justify wringing our hands over our overdose epidemic while at the same time we ignore and demonize a policy that can literally save hundreds of lives in these states every year?

People are dying right now. We can save a quarter of these lives right now. If we do nothing, when we can save so many lives, we surely must ask ourselves, “Are we stupid or sumpin’?”