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What Does Growing Conservative Support Mean for Pot Legalization?

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@import url(/common_scripts/css/styles.css);@import url(/templates/wmmcapital/css/styles.css); When Proposition 19, the bill legalizing marijuana in California, was first introduced by Richard Lee, the founder of marijuana trade school Oaksterdam University, many scoffed at the notion of its passing. Initially viewed as a grassroots, no pun intended, movement spearheaded by aging hippies and stoned liberals too apathetic to bring it to the ballot, Proposition 19 appeared dead in the water.

Months later, it was clear public opinion was mistaken. Bolstered by deficit born desperation and the unexpected but powerful support of visible conservatives, the bill is not only on the California ballot for Nov. 2, but quite likely to pass, and not just in California.

Since 2008, the political climate has been defined by the gridlock of two parties staunchly opposing one another and refusing to toe party lines. That the legalization of marijuana would arise as the issue prompting a deviation from this well traced pattern, with 25 percent of Republicans in favor, is shocking but nonetheless true. Proposition 19 has sparked a debate with borders far broader than California's. The movement not only usurped the attention from every other issue on the California ballot but drew it in on a national level as well. The media attention awarded to the bill has led to a nation-wide discussion about legalization for the entire country, prompting more than one conservative to speak up, and favorably.

For tea partiers and libertarians, the war on drugs, which in terms of enforcement, costs the government \$41.3 billion stands directly in opposition of their core values of minimizing infrastructure and cutting taxes. While many are reluctant to put their social values behind their political ones, the fiscal benefits of medical marijuana are such that that some recognize the trade off as mandatory.

Scholars at the Cato Institute, a think tank resolved to researching the principles of individual liberty, limited government and the free market within public policy; support Proposition 19 on the basis of consumer sovereignty and liberty. A study from the Institute, estimating additional tax revenue of \$46.7 billion from pot legalization, has become a cornerstone in the debate over what propositions supporters refer to as the end of drug prohibition. The tax figure, alongside the \$8.7 billion in savings calculated by the study has played a significant role in converting conservatives in support of the bill, particularly in the debt ridden state where Richard Lee first birthed Prop 19. Republican California Congressman, Dana Rohrabacher is among the conservative advocates of the bill, dismissing the gateway drug argument adopted by naysayers of Prop. 19 and declaring marijuana unthreatening from a social stand point. Rohrabacher is more focused on the capitalistic opportunities of legalization, specifically the capacity to expand on the existing \$14 billion in sales of California's most lucrative cash crop and help balance the budget. Famously conservative Fox News personality, Glenn Beck has also spoken out in favor of national legalization on the grounds that the drug's partial legality is fueling violence on the southern border and sending mixed messages to Mexico.

Grover Norquist, the Republican president of Americans for Tax Reform, shares Beck's perspective on border relations, pointing at U.S. drug prohibition as the fuel for Narcoterrorism and relenting at the cost of incarceration on taxpayers. Norquist is of the opinion that legalization serves conservative objectives both from a fiscal standpoint and through the potential improvements in national security.

Not all, or even half of conservatives, share this standpoint; however, the numbers appear to be growing alongside the hype, up 7 percent since 2005. The trend may not translate to a passed bill on Nov. 2, but unless the financial climate improves, signs point inevitably to 2012.

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Date: October 26, 2010 8:41 AM by ECHO134

aging hippies and stoned libs. to apathetic to bring it to the ballot ,thats deep! since your losing your starting to show your true colors.now your just getting nasty

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