



Jeff Sessions Continues to Oppose Medical Marijuana

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions is trying to crackdown federally on the marijuana industry. Twenty-nine states, D.C., Guam, and Puerto Rico legalized cannabis for medicinal purposes. Eight of those states and D.C. have legalized recreational marijuana use for adults.

A Quinnipiac poll reveals increased support for the legalization of cannabis. According to the poll, 94 percent of American citizens agree that medical marijuana use, under the care of a doctor, should be legal, and 61 percent support legalization for recreational purposes.

Despite the overwhelming support to legalize marijuana, Sessions assembled the Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety. On Aug. 5, 2017, the task force issued a report to Sessions, however, there were no recommendations that would advance the opposition on cannabis.

Sessions assembled the group to determine the best legal strategies to stop states that have legalized marijuana. Nevertheless, the federal law enforcement officials and prosecutors, who make up the task force, have come up empty concerning policy changes that would encourage the aggressive stance Sessions maintains on cannabis. In fact, the report supports the current policy issued by the Justice Department.

The report from the Task Force on Crime Reduction encourages more study and a continued hands-off approach to enforcement, according to the Associated Press. This report has not been released, however, the Associated Press has obtained portions of the document.

Sessions asserts that marijuana is comparable to heroin. He blames the legalization of cannabis for the increase in violent behaviors. In February, Sessions stated:

I believe it's an unhealthy practice, and current levels of THC in marijuana are very high compared to what they were a few years ago, and we're seeing real violence around that. Experts are telling me there's more violence around marijuana than one would think and there's big money involved.

Statistically, the rate of violent crimes has decreased where cannabis is legal.

- Denver experienced a 2.2 percent decrease in violent crimes and 8.9 percent drop in property crimes, after the first year recreational marijuana was legalized;
- Washington had a 10 percent drop in violent crime from 2011-14. Recreational marijuana was legalized in 2012;

- States that allow medical marijuana use, experienced a stable or decreased rate in violent crimes;
- The 11 states that legalized cannabis from 1990 to 2006, had no increases in any of the seven violent crime categories and showed a decrease in assaults and homicides, according to a study conducted in 2014.

These statistics may not be related to marijuana use. Crime statistics change rapidly and are notoriously unpredictable, therefore, a long-term analysis is far more beneficial. Research, conducted by the Cato Institute, on the legalization of cannabis suggests the decrease in violent crime may not deviate in the long-term study.

Founder of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), Keith Stroup, believes Sessions will find a way to interfere with state laws. However, NORML political director, Justin Strelak promises Sessions will be “both dazed and confused” by supportive forces, should he choose to interfere with the regulated cannabis market.

Many pro-legalization groups have promised a fight should the federal government impose on state laws and taxes. Legalized states have tightly regulated systems. These states generate tax revenue and jobs. More importantly, they took the marijuana market out of the hands of gangs and drug cartels.

In March, bipartisan senators encouraged Sessions to leave the marijuana regulation at the state level. More officials who were originally opposed to legalization, now support the idea. Longtime activist and medical marijuana patient, Gary Storck said,

The federal government would be better off focusing on real priorities, rather than wasting resources targeting state-legal marijuana.