



## **Letter to the editor: Read and learn about marijuana before you vote**

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A recent letter to the editor warns of dire consequences of legalizing marijuana. (Opinion Page, "Avoiding a dangerous pot hole," Feb. 8, 2018.) This has been the case since the 60s, with warnings of drug crazed teens ruining our country. Unfortunately, the effort of eradicating marijuana use in our country has jailed numerous people at great financial costs, with little evidence of long term success.

Whether marijuana is legalized or not, we should look at facts, and the facts are available since the legalization in several states within the last five years. Colorado and Washington legalized pot in 2013, Oregon and Alaska in 2014. Follow-up in those states is now published. In those states, the use of marijuana does not appear to have changed much. A 2017 report from the Washington legislature indicates a small drop in youth cannabis usage rates. This is similar to what is noted in Colorado. Crime is always an issue with drug use and a major impediment to legalization. Data from Denver and Seattle shows little evidence of crime rate change from before and after legalization.

Traffic accidents have been a concern with those arguing it will increase with marijuana use, against those who feel marijuana use will decrease alcohol use and so decrease accidents. In fact, one sees essentially no change in traffic accidents or fatalities around the time of legalization in Washington and Colorado. In spite of concerns about marijuana use and suicide, there does not appear to be a change in the number of suicides in Washington or Colorado since legalization.

It has been claimed that marijuana legalization would spark the economy with people moving to the states with legalization. While it is difficult to measure population changes in five years, housing prices, a substitute measure, shows both Denver and Seattle with increases in housing prices much the same before and after legalization. One area of the economy that has changed is tax revenue, with both Washington and Colorado reporting significant increases in tax return, higher even than initially expected.

The concern of IQ loss is not really related to legalization, since there is little change in use since legalization, but it needs to be reviewed as well. The initial study in 2012 was from New Zealand

and showed a loss of 8 points on the IQ scale in heavy marijuana users. Two large recent studies put a rather large hole in that study. The first was a twin study from 2017 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA. Looking at 789 twin pairs in two different locations, it reported that in comparing one twin who was a marijuana user to the non-using twin, no difference was found between the two over ten years. The second, also from 2017, published in the Journal of Psychopharmacology, followed 2,000 British teens with IQ testing before and after years of marijuana use. No loss of IQ points was found. Another report looked at high school standardization tests, in Washington state, and no change was seen after legalization.

If one feels this is just liberal propaganda, most of the above, except the science journals, comes from the Cato Institute, a conservative libertarian think tank/analysis.

Everyone should vote, but you should vote based on facts. Do your research first, and learn the facts.