

MARIJUANA MOMENT

Border Patrol Union Head Admits Legalizing Marijuana Forces Cartels Out Of The Market

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The head of the labor union that represents U.S. Border Patrol agents acknowledged on Friday that states that legalize marijuana are disrupting cartel activity.

While National Border Patrol Council President Brandon Judd was attempting to downplay the impact of legalization, he seemed to inadvertently make a case for the regulation all illicit drugs by arguing that cartels move away from smuggling cannabis and on to other substances when states legalize.

Judd made the remarks during an appearance on C-SPAN's Washington Journal, where a caller said that "the states that have legalized marijuana have done more damage to the cartels than the [Drug Enforcement Administration] could ever think about doing."

"As far as drugs go, all we do is we enforce the laws. We don't determine what those laws are," Judd, who is scheduled to meet with President Trump on Friday, replied. "If Congress determines that marijuana is going to be legal, then we're not going to seize marijuana."

"But what I will tell you is when he points out that certain states have legalized marijuana, all the cartels do is they just transition to another drug that creates more profit," he said. "Even if you legalize marijuana, it doesn't mean that drugs are going to stop. They're just going to go and start smuggling the opioids, the fentanyl."

One potential solution that Judd didn't raise would be to legalize those other drugs to continue to remove the profit motive for cartels. Former presidential candidate Andrew Yang made a similar argument in December.

Federal data on Border Patrol drug seizures seems to substantiate the idea that cannabis legalization at the state level has reduced demand for the product from the illicit market. According to a 2018 report from the Cato Institute, these substantial declines are attributable to state-level cannabis reform efforts, which "has significantly undercut marijuana smuggling."

Additionally, legalization seems to be helping to reduce federal marijuana trafficking prosecutions, with reports showing decreases of such cases year over year since states regulated markets have come online.

In his annual report last year, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts also noted reduced federal marijuana prosecutions—another indication that the market for illegally sourced marijuana is drying up as more adults consumers are able to buy the product in legal stores.