

Drug Legalization: Pros And Cons As To Its Viability As A Means To End The Drug War

Carolina Moreno | August 28, 2012-08-28

To legalize or not to legalize?

Drug legalization, a hot button topic if there ever was one, is increasingly being presented as the only remaining viable solution to a "failed" war on drugs.

In April -- at the Sixth Summit of the Americas in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia - - the legalization question played a key and controversial role as 33 heads of state gathered to discuss issues affecting the region.

Several Latin American leaders proposed legalization or regulated drug markets as strategies to end the drug cartel-related violence spreading across their homelands. The United States, however, remained firmly opposed to legalization -- citing risks of increased corruption and the potential loss of civic order.

More recently, the NAACP announced its support for a Colorado ballot initiative that will put the question of marijuana legalization to state voters this November. The organization's endorsement stands as a rebuttal to the disproportionate impact of drug war laws and enforcement on the state's black and Latino populations.

The drug war has cost billions of dollars, decimated tens of thousands of lives, and incarcerated hundreds of thousands of people across the Western Hemisphere. Legalization remains a matter of unsettled debate. And yet, the issue is not one being seriously discussed at the 2012 Republican or Democratic party conventions.

It should be.

[Cato Study Featured in a Slide-Show: *EXPERTS THE WORLD OVER HAVE VARYING OPINIONS ON LEGALIZATION AS THE SOLUTION TO THE DRUG WAR*]

The Economic Argument: 2010 Cato institute study found:

"The report concludes that drug legalization would reduce government expenditure about \$41.3 billion annually. Roughly \$25.7 billion of this

savings would accrue to state and local governments, and roughly \$15.6 billion to the federal government. About \$8.7 billion of the savings would result from legalization of marijuana, \$20 billion from legalization of cocaine and heroin, and \$12.6 billion from legalization of all other drugs.

Legalization would also generate tax revenue of roughly \$46.7 billion annually if drugs were taxed at rates comparable to those on alcohol and tobacco. About \$8.7 billion of this revenue would result from legalization of marijuana, \$32.6 billion from legalization of cocaine and heroin, and \$5.5 billion from legalization of all other drugs."