



## *Pat Robertson: Legalize marijuana and treat it like alcohol*

By [Michael Winter](#), USA TODAY, Mar 08, 2012

---

Advocates for legalizing marijuana have found a new -- and surprising -- supporter: evangelical leader Pat Robertson.

The man behind the Christian Broadcasting Network and conservative family values offered his endorsement in an interview with *The New York Times*.

"I really believe we should treat marijuana the way we treat beverage alcohol," the 81-year-old Robertson said Wednesday. "I've never used marijuana and I don't intend to, but it's just one of those things that I think: this war on drugs just hasn't succeeded."

"It's completely out of control," he continued. "Prisons are being overcrowded with juvenile offenders having to do with drugs. And the penalties, the maximums, some of them could get 10 years for possession of a joint of marijuana. It makes no sense at all."

He said no one event or moment caused the conversion. Rather, it's his belief that the nation has over the years "gone overboard on this concept of being tough on crime."

"I believe in working with the hearts of people, and not locking them up," he said.

Robertson made similar comments last week on his *700 Club* program ([video](#)) and in 2010, the *Times* says.

Colorado and Washington voters will decide on legalization in November. Robertson said he supported the ballot measures but would not campaign for them. His support thrilled legalization advocates and "was welcomed by some other religious leaders, especially those in African-American communities who have long argued that blacks are unfairly targeted in drug cases," the *Times* writes.

*Christianity Today* points out that despite Robertson's pro-pot stance today, he has a longer history of being tough on drug crimes:

(He) ran for president as a hard-liner on drug enforcement. After losing his bid to be the Republican presidential candidate in 1988, Robertson said at the Republican National Convention that the U.S. should be "a city set on a hill ... where the plague of drugs is no more and those who would destroy and debase our children with illegal drugs are given life sentences in prison with no chance for parole."

More recently, Robertson said over-incarceration in the U.S. is due to a "liberal mindset to have an all-encompassing government." Many policy experts would agree that — for good or ill — there are many more prisoners today due to the nation's drug laws. Most of these laws, though, were advocated most strongly by conservatives. Billy Atwell of the Chuck Colson Center for the Christian Worldview opposed a 2010 California effort to treat marijuana just like alcohol. "There is no legitimate moral or pragmatic reason to legalize a drug that destroys the lives of those addicted to it and that fuels crime and corruption," Atwell said.

The *International Business Times* notes that Robertson isn't the first influential conservative to endorse legalization. Others include William F. Buckley Jr., the late founder of the *National Review*; the late Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman; broadcaster Glenn Beck; economist Thomas Sowell and former secretary of State George Shultz.

Two major conservative think tanks also support it: the Cato Institute and the American Enterprise Institute. The Heritage Foundation, however, has just said no.