

# The Bitter Disconnect



## Should the Federal Government prohibit Cannabis?

Though the Obama administration has been the first to open a dialog exploring marijuana prohibition's end, the government's message is convoluted and inconsistent with public opinion. While Attorney General Eric Holder discusses a shift in U.S. Marijuana Policy that respects state marijuana laws, the Republican-controlled House looks to pass legislation that will punish the president for not faithfully executing the federally mandated Controlled Substance Act. This new legislation will allow Congress to effectively sue the president for not acting against states that ignore 75 years of anti-marijuana propaganda and legalize, even though numerous surveys, studies and Gallup Polls show that over 55% of U.S. citizens support marijuana legalization.

In response to President Obama's "hands off" approach and reassuring words expressing his desire to see the legalization experiment succeed in both Washington and Colorado, Michelle Leonhart (head of the DEA) has been throwing a tantrum, the likes of which none have seen since Yosemite Sam was ousted by Bugs Bunny in the old west. She has openly criticized Obama for associating with pro-legalization groups and announced her disdain at the thought of a hemp flag flying over the U.S. Capitol. She has even overruled DEA administrative recommendations for marijuana research, which would allow better insight into both medicinal and industrial potentials of the cannabis plant.

Throughout marijuana prohibition, there has been an irrational unwillingness to explore cannabis plant uses. Even though this plant was the first cash crop in America and we import hundreds of millions of dollars in hemp products each year, the U.S. government refuses to legalize hemp production in this country. Despite thousands of documented medical case studies, international research and a U.S. owned patent (US Patent 6630507) titled "Cannabinoids as Antioxidants and Neuroprotectants," the federal government classifies marijuana as a Schedule 1 substance, claiming that the plant has no medicinal value. Unfortunately, the trickle down effect of this ignorance is not only poisoning the minds of our leaders, but costing the U.S. jobs, revenue and a better quality of life for those who could benefit from the plant's healing properties.

But those who oppose legalization have compiled their own supporting research and polls, the majority of which were conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which focuses on the negative impacts of cannabis on society. The evidence points toward addiction and developmental issues in adolescent brains, and also shows an increase in marijuana use among adolescents, contradictory to the figures in states that have legalized marijuana use in some manner. Though I do not discredit their

research, there are better ways to educate and discourage adolescents from experimenting with drugs, as demonstrated by the tobacco industry, which has seen a dramatic decline in adolescent use since anti-tobacco/teen-targeted advertising started in the late '80s.

Both pro-legalization and anti-legalization movements have an abundance of supporting evidence to prove or disprove their particular stance. Any study can be manipulated to prove a particular theory with the proper appointment of study subjects, controlled environments and biased agendas. The laws of nature dictate that anything can happen, at any given time, in any given place, providing the conditions are right. Where a wise man will accept those conditions and adapt, an ambitious man will manipulate those conditions to suit his needs. Such is the nature of all research conducted to discover pre-concluded theories or facts.

Therefore we must discard all of the conflicting evidence and look at the items that remain. Somewhere in the middle you will find the facts that have nothing to do with public opinion, corporate agendas or child development. The facts have more to do with your civil liberties. According to the Declaration of Independence, all men have the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and we are free to practice these rights in the privacy of our own homes, on our own properties, as long as these practices do not infringe upon another's rights to do the same.

So, in my mind, the real question is not at all about the legalization of marijuana. The real question is: Are we slaves or are we free men? And if we are free men, should we not be allowed to determine our own morals and values, not only those approved by the federal government?