

Why Oklahoma & Nebraska Hate America's Children

Colorado just celebrated their one year anniversary of legalized recreational cannabis. Though the results of regulation and taxation did not meet the optimistic predictions of some supporters, the overall outcome has been positive. The state has created over 10,000 licensed jobs within the marijuana industry, not including those created in associated markets such as construction, business services, tourism or entertainment. Crime in Colorado has also seen a significant decrease, with violent crime falling to over 5.5%, accompanied by decreases in property crime, statewide traffic fatalities and adolescent drug use. There was also the added benefit of tax revenue collected from marijuana sales and licensing; the CO Department of Revenue has not yet released a final number, but as of Oct 2014, it had surpassed \$40 million. These are pretty convincing statistics to support an ever-growing campaign to regulate and tax cannabis on a national level, yet marijuana still remains illegal as a Schedule-I Drug.

This last fact seems to be the foundation for a new lawsuit filed by Nebraska and Oklahoma last month, challenging Colorado's right to approve legislation to legalize marijuana within its borders. This lawsuit states that, "Amendment 64 has created a dangerous gap in the federal drug control system enacted by the US Congress. Marijuana flows from this gap into neighboring states, undermining plaintiff states' own marijuana bans, draining their treasuries and placing stress on their criminal justice systems ..."

A spokesperson from Attorney General of Oklahoma Scoot Pruitt's office issued a statement declaring that the lawsuit filed by Oklahoma and Nebraska "does not challenge in any manner or form Colorado's legalization of marijuana for use in possession in that state. Rather, the lawsuit challenges only the portion of Colorado's law that legalized the commercialization of marijuana because those actions have led to an influx of illegal drugs entering surrounding states (like Oklahoma) in violation of their own state laws."

USA Today has even reported that some towns in Nebraska have seen a rise in felony drug arrests of up to 400% in areas along the Colorado border over the past three years. Though many of the arrests were not directly associated with marijuana, nor could it be verified that the sources were directly linked to Colorado residents, this data has helped promote a state of panic in response to progressive reform on a sensitive topic.

It seems that there will always be a "demonizing" approach to the manner in which opposition to cannabis reform will debate the justification for marijuana prohibition. In lieu of the many documented economic, social and medical benefits that regulation and taxation have brought to Colorado, pessimists still maintain a sky-is-falling mentality concerning an end to marijuana prohibition. A number of medical studies from worldwide sources show that there are significant medical benefits from the proper use of cannabis, yet it is still classified as a Schedule-I drug with no determined medical use.

I can only assume that the supporters of such federal laws have never heard of the hundreds of cases of children in the US who are currently being treated for debilitating and/or life-threatening diseases with medicinal cannabis. These are adolescents, infants and toddlers, who have mostly been given up on or failed by modern medicine and science. These are children and families who have been given a second chance at a normal life after being told that there were no other options. The same children championed

by opponents to the reform movement and their rallying cry of “What is the message we are sending to our children?”

Now I pose the same question to those who support the pending lawsuit against the state of Colorado. “What is the message that YOU are sending to our children?”