

## MARIJUANA LOBBY “SPIN” VS. THE TRUTH

- Spin:** Taxing marijuana like alcohol and tobacco would result in millions of dollars in additional tax revenues for vital services, such as our schools, which have faced millions in budget cuts over the past few years.”
- Truth:** Marijuana, like alcohol and tobacco, would be taxed and generate revenue. However, what they fail to mention is that tax revenues from our two legal substances, alcohol and tobacco, cover less than 15% of the economic costs due to use of these substances. That includes healthcare, treatment, lost productivity, criminal justice costs, traffic crashes and fatalities and drop-outs, to name just a few. It is reasonable to conclude that the figures with marijuana use, if legalized, would mirror those of alcohol and tobacco.
- Spin:** Hundreds of thousands of people are arrested each year for possession of small amounts of marijuana. Marijuana offenses are causing overcrowding in our prisons, crowding our court systems, presenting enormous costs to our legal system and law enforcement, taking time away from catching and prosecuting violent criminals.
- Truth:** In Colorado, possession of a small amount of marijuana results in a citation, like a traffic ticket. The fine is \$100. Less than 1% of the prison population in Colorado is incarcerated for any kind of marijuana offense including large-scale distribution and cultivation. There are more people in prison for repeated traffic offenses than marijuana offenses.
- Spin:** The War on Drugs has been a failure; that millions of dollars are spent every year fighting a losing battle.
- Truth:** Use of the term ‘War on Drugs’ by President Nixon, just like the term “War on Poverty” by President Johnson, was unfortunate. Anytime you deal with human behavior you will never achieve total victory. The key is to limit the number of people engaged in the activity and thus the corresponding negative impact. How to measure success and failure is subjective. However, the very few that would argue that to reduce the rate of drug abuse from the late 1970’s by 50% over a fifteen-year period, and generally maintain stability, is a failure. There are relatively few that would argue that reducing teen drug abuse over the last decade by 24% is a failure. There are very few that would argue that reducing clandestine labs in Colorado from over 300 a year to less than 10 is a failure. There are very few that would argue reducing cocaine and methamphetamine use down to .6% and .2%, respectively, of our population is a failure.

**Spin:** Legalizing marijuana would cut off the flow of money to Mexican drug cartels who sell marijuana in the U.S. It would reduce the amount of crime and violence associated with the marijuana trade.

**Truth:** There is much more to Mexican drug cartels than marijuana trafficking. A RAND study showed that, in our most populous state (California) with six times the population of Colorado, legalizing marijuana would only affect between 2% and 4% of the cartels’ profits. U.S. drug users only make up about 10% of the worldwide users of drugs. The cartels are involved in all types of crimes including trafficking, human smuggling, extortion, and kidnap. Corruption within the Mexican government is a major problem that allows the cartels to flourish.

**Spin:** Marijuana could be regulated like alcohol and tobacco.

**Truth:** Alcohol and tobacco are the greatest indicators of why legalizing marijuana would be devastating in terms of economic and human suffering. Colorado cannot regulate marijuana like alcohol and tobacco because it still remains against federal law. Marijuana retail establishments would still be criminal enterprises under federal law and their customers federal law violators. The only way to regulate marijuana like alcohol and tobacco would be to change federal law.

**Spin:** We don’t want to legalize marijuana but rather decriminalize it.

**Truth:** No matter how they mask it they are, in fact, attempting to legalize marijuana. The possession of less than 2 oz. or over 100 marijuana cigarettes has already been decriminalized in Colorado.

**Spin:** Marijuana is safe and safer than alcohol.

**Truth:** That assertion is not supported by the thousands of medical and scientific studies and research, from all over the world, by some of the most prestigious universities and medical schools. Studies confirm that marijuana use can be addicting, adversely affect physical and mental health, is particularly dangerous for our youth, and can result in poor driving, employees and students. These neutral and objective studies are available for review.

Marijuana use is not more, or less, safe than alcohol since much depends on the intoxication level and circumstances with the impaired individual. It should be noted that most social drinkers do not drink to become intoxicated, whereas the sole purpose of using marijuana is to “get a buzz”. That is why the higher-THC-content (intoxicant) marijuana is more desirable for the user. The significant negative impacts of alcohol on our society are attributed to the fact that, because it’s legal, so many people (130 million) regularly use it. In fact, more people are addicted to alcohol (18 million) than regularly use marijuana (16.7 million). This is a good reason for not using alcohol as a model for marijuana.