

# [ GOOD NEWS ]

Drug use among U.S. youth was cut in half since 1980 and is on the decline. This was accomplished through prevention, education, treatment, law enforcement and community initiatives.

# REALITY

Nations that liberalize drug policy, such as Great Britain and Spain, experience increased rates of marijuana and drug use among youth.

By legalizing drugs, no nation has ever lowered drug use among youth.



"Just the Facts" is a resource of information for parents to help equip them in dealing with issues that effect their teens.

If you have any questions or comments about the information contained in this brochure, please contact the organization below.

## ELKS DRUG AWARENESS PROGRAM

*"Prevention through Education"*

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Drug Awareness Program funding is provided by the Elks National Foundation, the charitable arm of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the USA. The Elks are committed to providing a healthy future for America's youth. In addition to educating young people about the dangers of drugs, the Elks provide positive alternatives such as the Hoop Shoot® and Soccer Shoot athletic programs and Youth Veteran Volunteers. The Elks National Foundation also annually awards more than \$3 million in college scholarships. For more information, contact your local Elks Lodge or visit the Elks website at [www.elks.org/YouthActivities.cfm](http://www.elks.org/YouthActivities.cfm).

## JUST THE FACTS



# LEGALIZING MARIJUANA



## ELKS DRUG AWARENESS PROGRAM



#### • An Organized Big Money Lobby

Marijuana legalization and/or liberalization has big money behind it, primarily through a few billionaires who support an array of groups lobbying full time to advocate weaker drug laws. This network dominates the internet and funds political campaigns for pro-marijuana candidates and legislation.

An early major marijuana smokers' lobby, NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws) admits receiving drug dealer money, according to its founder, and originally advocated legalizing all drugs, including cocaine. The interests of children, not big money, business or radical political agendas, should determine drug policy.

#### • Alcohol and Drugs

The dangers and costs associated with alcohol abuse and intoxication are staggering, even though a majority of adults who use alcohol on occasion as a beverage avoid intoxication. For youth, however, underage drinking is a major risk since alcohol is usually consumed for the specific purpose of intoxication or getting high. Underage drinking is never a responsible choice.

Marijuana and illegal drugs are used solely for their intoxicating effects by adults and youth. These substances are always used to get high or stoned and do not serve as a beverage. When a substance is used for the purpose of intoxication, treatment experts call that use a form of abuse. The United Nations defines all use of illegal drugs as abuse.

#### • Drug "Rights"

Individual rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. Illegal drugs inevitably lead to intoxication and impairment of good judgment. Impaired minds often make unsafe decisions about child care, driving, and safety in the workplace, putting non-users at risk. Non-using children have the "right" to drug-free schools, sober drivers, parents, neighborhoods, and teachers. Drug use costs society \$60 billion a year and drug use returns no public benefit.

#### • Is Giving Up an Option?

An argument is made: we cannot stop all drug use so we might as well legalize, tax it, and learn to live with it. Does the same hold true for racism, hate crimes, pollution, or child abuse? If we are going to accept enslavement of some children to drugs, whose children will they be? Tobacco and alcohol taxes do not come close to paying their social costs.

#### • Pot Never Killed

Accidents are the leading cause of death among youth. Today's marijuana is much stronger than ever before and is linked to tens of thousands of impaired driving accidents each year. A cheaper, stronger, legal marijuana would lead to even more accidents, both on the road as well as in the work place, resulting in the deaths of youth and adults alike. Marijuana smoke has the same cancer causing chemicals as tobacco and causes respiratory damage. The drug is correlated with failure at school, depression, and memory loss. Marijuana is the number one drug problem for youth in treatment centers in the United States.

#### • History Lesson

In 1979 numerous states decriminalized marijuana, the White House supported it, and the marijuana smokers' lobby power was at a peak. The result: the highest levels of youth drug use of any civilized nation with one in ten high school seniors stoned on pot every day of the week!

Parents, not government, reversed this policy and with smart enforcement and strong prevention and treatment policies, youth drug use was cut in half and is still on the decline.

#### • Drug Enforcement Reality

Legalizing marijuana will not reduce drug related arrests. There are more alcohol related arrests than marijuana arrests already and alcohol is legal. Nationwide, 70% of all arrests are for public nuisance offenses, and intoxicated people account for a high number of these.

## what's the point?

Legalization would result in more public intoxication, resulting in more public nuisances, violence, more police arrests and increased resource demand.

Drug offenders in prison are primarily repeat criminals, often involved in drug dealing and other crimes, including violent offenses. Although less than 1% of state prisoners are first time non-violent marijuana offenders, many of these were large scale dealers. The average amount of pot that federal marijuana prisoners were involved with was 3.5 tons!

#### • What is the Message to Youth?

Legalization sends a clear message to youth that drugs are not that bad and that society is not willing to pay the cost to protect them. Compare the use of the legal drug alcohol among seniors (49%) to that of marijuana (20%) — drug laws send a message and inhibit drug use. A majority of teens polled say that fear of getting in trouble with the law is a major reason for them to steer clear of drugs.

#### • The Answer...

No one advocates overly harsh penalties for minor drug use. Drug law enforcement are increasingly employing *diversion to treatment* and prevention. The justice system is the top source of referral for many drug treatment centers. President Clinton's brother attributed the criminal justice system with saving his life by forcing him to confront a drug problem. Consequences that are fair and responsive have been found to be effective. Surrender to drugs is not an option.

