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## Legalizing marijuana is the only just path forward

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## Legalizing marijuana is the only just path forward

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Leah Savage (<https://mainecampus.com/author/lsavage/>)

Opinion (<https://mainecampus.com/category/opinion/>) | April 26, 2021

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Tuesday was April 20, or 4/20, so here's a friendly reminder in light of the holiday; Barack Obama smoked (<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/apr/25/obama-talks-smoking-weed-with-college-students/>) marijuana, and he isn't a degenerate, he was the 44th president of the United States. Marijuana has been legalized in 16 states as well as Washington, D.C., and there are numerous studies showing that marijuana is, at the very least, just as safe as alcohol.

So why are over 40,000 Americans (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanoleck/2020/06/26/with-40000-americans-incarcerated-for-marijuana-offenses-the-cannabis-industry-needs-to-step-up-activists-said-this-week/?sh=577fe83cc16f>) still incarcerated for marijuana-related charges?

One answer to that question is fairly simple: decriminalizing marijuana nationwide would take away one "legal" way our country disproportionately incarcerates Black people and people of color. According to a 2020 Forbes article, Black people are 3.64 times (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomangell/2020/04/20/on-420-aclu-highlights-racist-marijuana-enforcement-in-new-report/?sh=be5c50774876>) more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people. While marijuana use becomes more mainstream and geared towards white, middle and upper-income consumers in some states it remains a legal justification for racial injustice.

Here are a few quick facts to compare alcohol and marijuana: the risk of death from marijuana use is about 114 times lower (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4311234/>) than that of alcohol use, it's less addictive (<https://www.drugpolicyfacts.org/node/3628>) than alcohol or any other drug, and it's rarely associated with emergency room visits compared to the 21% of all injuries and 36% of hospitalized (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/10/111014162820.htm>) assaults that are attributed to alcohol use. If alcohol is not only legal but widely normalized, then possession of marijuana shouldn't be a ticket to prison.

Yet somehow, 43% of all drug arrests in 2018 (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomangell/2020/04/20/on-420-aclu-highlights-racist-marijuana-enforcement-in-new-report/?sh=be5c50774876>) were for marijuana — and of that 43%, 89.6% were for possession alone. That is a massive amount of marijuana arrests, all simply for having a drug that, on paper, poses less of a danger to the consumer and others than alcohol.

Our justice system dehumanizes those who are arrested for these petty charges, and so it is important that we make a personal choice to see incarcerated individuals as people. They're not just a statistic, they're people with lives and families, jobs and futures. With a drug arrest on your record, and potential time in prison, moving forward and living life without being pegged as a criminal isn't an easy accomplishment. Rather, it's a set-up for failure.

According to Forbes, the rate of unemployment among those with criminal records was a whopping 30% (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanoleck/2020/06/26/with-40000-americans-incarcerated-for-marijuana-offenses-the-cannabis-industry-needs-to-step-up-activists-said-this-week/?sh=577fe83cc16f>) before the pandemic. That figure includes anyone with a drug-related criminal record. To put it plainly, you can be arrested for simply having marijuana in your possession in a state where it's not recreationally legal and your job prospects could be permanently impacted as a result. That's exactly what will likely happen to many of those 40,000 people who are currently in jail for a substance you can buy at an apothecary in Waterville, Maine.

Let's remember that, as the comedian John Mulaney (<https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/2017/08/02/john-mulaney-comeback-kid-2015-full-transcript/>) said, marijuana has always been practically legal for white people.

"We don't go to jail for marijuana, you silly billy," Mulaney said in his special, "The Comeback Kid," the "we" being, of course, white people. It's a sad truth behind a thin veil of humor. It's time to stop putting people of color in jail for a drug that just about any study shows is not any more dangerous to you, others or society than alcohol is. Let's get those 40,000 people out, let's stop using marijuana as a tool to put people of color behind bars, and let's decriminalize it everywhere.

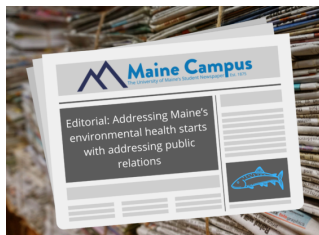
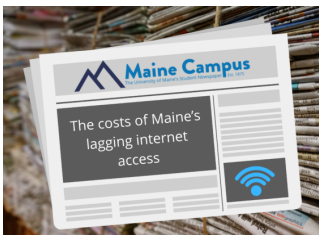


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**Brian Kelly** • 3 days ago • edited

"Legalizing marijuana is the only just path forward" is the title of this article. Yet, this article does not discuss nor support legalization at all. Rather, it misleadingly calls for "decriminalization" instead. Although this article has some very well researched statistics which would make a strong argument for total "legalization", the way it only calls for nationwide "decriminalization" seems deceptive. Since the title suggests recommending full federal legalization. Which actually is, "the only just path forward".

True decriminalization means completely de-scheduling and removing cannabis from the controlled substances list. Ensuring that possession and purchasing cannabis truly are no longer considered criminal.

So-called "decriminalization", the kind that Biden and others whom are obviously personally morally opposed to anybody consuming cannabis are trying to sell the public, only reschedules cannabis from a schedule one controlled substance to a schedule two controlled substance. On the same level as meth and cocaine. Therefore, cannabis consumers will still be treated as common criminals under so-called "decriminalization". Again, without completely removing cannabis from the controlled substances list entirely, this solves nothing.

Don't be fooled by marijuana "decriminalization" because citizens are still going to be treated like common criminals for marijuana under it. This is what desperate anti-marijuana prohibitionist types will now settle for.

Police will confiscate your "illegally purchased" marijuana under so-called "decriminalization".

They also fail to mention the additional huge cost of court costs which can range from several hundred to several thousand dollars on top of the relatively

see more

**Brian Kelly** → Brian Kelly • 3 days ago

Marijuana consumers deserve and demand equal rights and protections under our laws that are currently afforded to the drinkers of far more dangerous and deadly, yet perfectly legal, widely accepted, endlessly advertised and even glorified as an All-American pastime, alcohol.

Plain and simple!

Legalize Nationwide!

The "War on Marijuana" has been a complete and utter failure. It is the largest component of the broader yet equally unsuccessful "War on Drugs" that has cost our country over a trillion dollars.

Instead of The United States wasting Billions upon Billions more of our yearly tax dollars fighting a never ending "War on Marijuana", lets generate Billions of dollars, and improve the deficit instead. It's a no brainer.

The Prohibition of Marijuana has also ruined the lives of many of our loved ones. In numbers greater than any other nation, our loved ones are being sent to jail and are being given permanent criminal records. Especially, if they happen to be of the "wrong" skin color or they happen to be from the "wrong" neighborhood. Which ruin their chances of employment for the rest of their lives, and for what reason?

Marijuana is much safer to consume than alcohol. Yet do we lock people up for choosing to drink?

Let's end this hypocrisy now!

[see more](#)**Brian Kelly** → Brian Kelly • 3 days ago

It's time for us, the majority of The People to take back control of our national marijuana policy. By voting OUT of office any and all politicians who very publicly and vocally admit to having an anti-marijuana, prohibitionist agenda! Time to vote'em all OUT of office. Period. Plain and simple.

Politicians who continue to demonize Marijuana, Corrupt Law Enforcement Officials who prefer to ruin peoples lives over Marijuana possession rather than solve real crimes who fund their departments toys and salaries with monies acquired through Marijuana home raids, seizures and forfeitures, and so-called "Addiction Specialists" who make their income off of the judicial misfortunes of our citizens who choose marijuana, - Your actions go against The Will of The People and Your Days In Office Are Numbered! Find new careers before you don't have one.

The People have spoken! Get on-board with Marijuana Legalization Nationwide, or be left behind and find new careers. Your choice.

**Brian Kelly** → Brian Kelly • 3 days ago

Fear of Marijuana Legalization Nationwide is unfounded. Not based on any science or fact whatsoever. So please prohibitionists, we beg you to give your scare tactics, "Conspiracy Theories" and "Doomsday Scenarios" over the inevitable Legalization of Marijuana Nationwide a rest. Nobody is buying them anymore these days. Okay?

Furthermore, if all prohibitionists get when they look into that nice, big and shiny crystal ball of theirs, while wondering about the future of marijuana legalization, is horror, doom, and despair, well then I suggest they return that thing as quickly as possible and reclaim the money they shelled out for it, since it's obviously defective.

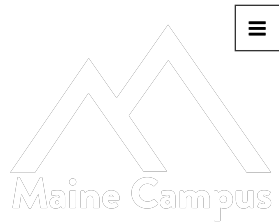
The prohibition of marijuana has not decreased the supply nor the demand for marijuana at all. Not one single iota, and it never will. Just a huge and complete waste of our tax dollars to continue criminalizing citizens for choosing a natural, non-toxic, relatively benign plant proven to be much safer than alcohol.

If prohibitionists are going to take it upon themselves to worry about "saving us all" from ourselves, then they need to start with the drug that causes more death and destruction than every other drug in the world COMBINED, which is alcohol!

Why do prohibitionists feel the continued need to vilify and demonize marijuana when they could more wisely focus their efforts on a real, proven killer, alcohol, which again causes more destruction, violence, and death than all other drugs, COMBINED?

Prohibitionists really should get their priorities straight and/or practice a little live and let live. They'll live longer, happier, and

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