
Should Medical Marijuana Be Legalized? Illinois

According to ABC7, a poll from SIU Carbondale shows that 74.4% of Illinois citizens support the legalization of recreational marijuana. Illinois has already somewhat decriminalized pot somewhat and legalized medical marijuana as well. Eight states and Washington DC have already legalized pot completely, many other states are reluctant to legalize it thanks to the stigmas that marijuana holds. Some states, including Illinois, have given medical marijuana a pass. It will be beneficial to Illinois and everywhere else if recreational marijuana is also legalized because it will boost the economy, it will help stop the war on drugs and will not negatively affect public safety, and legal marijuana is regulated for safety and taxed.

Both Illinois and the rest of America's economy will strongly benefit from the legalization of marijuana. Illinois has been doing rather poorly in terms of its economy, so the revenue generated from marijuana could give Illinois the push it needs. According to Illinois Policy, Illinois has suffered a great amount of budget instability, unemployment, and tens of thousands of people dropping out of the labor force (Illinois). Illinois' growth rate continues to be well below the national average. The booming business of marijuana can give Illinois plenty of new jobs and revenue. According to The Cannabist, the cannabis industry could reach \$24.5 billion in terms of individual state sales and create 255,000 jobs by 2025 (Alicia). Mere stigmas and misinformation shouldn't hold Illinois back from such an opportunity. Even with just the medical marijuana market alone, Florida has reached \$2.51 billion (Alicia). It's obvious to see that marijuana is a very valuable cash crop that will benefit not only Illinois, but the entire country if it is completely legalized on a federal level. If more states including Illinois joined in on legalizing recreational marijuana, the number of people currently employed in the industry (which is currently around 150,000 people within the legal states) could potentially triple (Troy). The revenue from recreational marijuana can even benefit other industries within the state and rest of the country. According to Daily Marijuana Observer, "Every dollar spent in the marijuana industry generates between \$2.13 and \$2.40 in economic activity. That means that the marijuana industry is stimulating growth in the surrounding industries. Every surrounding industry, from food, to transportation services, to banking and tourism, benefit from marijuana legalization." (Troy). The evidence shows that marijuana is already becoming a huge help to the United States economy, even with just eight states having it completely legal. Illinois will get the exact help it needs if this state joins in.

The legalization of recreational marijuana will help put an end to the war on drugs, and possibly even improve public safety. Opponents of legalizing pot have concerns such as the black market, drug cartels, and traffic fatalities. While these are valid concerns, recreational marijuana does not make such negative effects that people predict to happen. According to the American Journal Of Public Health, "Three years after recreational marijuana legalization, changes in motor vehicle crash fatality rates for Washington and Colorado were not statistically different from those in similar states without recreational marijuana legalization" (Jayson). Those long term studies show that marijuana will not make traffic significantly less safer to drive in. In fact, one study even suggests that traffic related deaths dropped by 11% on average after the legalization in some states (Cohen). Legalizing marijuana in the US will also decrease the profits from drug cartels and help fight against the black market. According to Stephen Downing, who is a retired police chief, "U.S. law enforcement officials report that as much as 70% of

cartel profits come from marijuana alone. There's no question that ending today's prohibition on drugs -- starting with marijuana -- would do more to hurt the cartels than any level of law enforcement skill or dedication ever can." (Stephen). Legalizing both medical and recreational marijuana will bring more security and safety to the country than any other option.

Lastly, legalizing recreational marijuana means that the production of pot is regulated for consumer safety, and that the taxes can go to important public services. According to Time, Colorado has generated \$105 in tax revenue within 2016-2017, and those funds will be given to the "Marijuana Tax Cash Fund" for housing, mental health programs in jails, and health programs within schools (Calfas). The same Time article also mentions that \$15.3 million was also put towards assisting the homeless, \$9.7 million was given towards public schools to add 150 new health professionals, and another \$5.9 million will help target illegal sales of marijuana. Legalized marijuana also means that the production will be regulated, and the quality and safety of the product is important to the consumer. Such regulations will prevent marijuana from having harmful substances such as mold, fungus, or pesticides. According to the Washington Legislature, Washington has enforced regulations such as childproof packaging, limitations on serving sizes of edible products, health warnings, labels stating the concentration of THC, and more (Washington). Other states such as California have also enforced similar regulations. When recreational marijuana is legalized, strict health and safety regulations and taxes can be enforced to benefit consumer safety and bring funds to public services.

To conclude, Illinois should join the other eight states and Washington DC with the legalization of recreational marijuana to benefit both the state's economy and the entire country. Marijuana gives much more good than harm, such as stimulating the economy, helping put an end to the war on drugs, possibly improving public safety rather than hurting, regulations for the sake of consumer safety, and taxes for public services. The time has come to put an end to this prohibition against marijuana.