

THE **NORML** NEWS

your National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

NORML Unveils 2005 "Truth Report"

Comprehensive Report Refutes White House's Top Marijuana Myths

Washington, DC: Government claims regarding cannabis are misleading, exaggerated, and undermine the administration's ability to effectively educate the public on the issues of illicit drugs and drug policy, concludes a comprehensive report issued today by The NORML Foundation.

The report, entitled "The 2005 NORML Truth Report: Your Government Is Lying To You (Again) About Marijuana," is a detailed analysis and refutation of the White House's more prominent allegations regarding marijuana and marijuana policy.

Among the government's claims examined in NORML's extensive report:

*** "Nationwide, no drug matches the threat posed by marijuana."**

*** "The addiction to marijuana by our youth exceeds their addiction rates for alcohol ... and all other drugs combined."**

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Feds Spend Nearly \$4 Billion Annually On Failed Pot Policy, Economics Report Says

Washington, DC: Federal spending on marijuana-related activities - primarily enforcing criminal policies prohibiting the drug's use - cost taxpayers nearly \$4 billion annually, but fail to influence the public's use or perception of the drug, according to an economic report released by the non-partisan Washington, DC think-tank Taxpayers for Common Sense. "Annual federal marijuana spending is at least \$3.67 billion [per year,] yet little evidence indicates this spending accomplishes the government's stated goal of reducing marijuana use," concludes the report.

Of this total cost, the federal government spends \$1.43 billion enforcing marijuana prohibition, \$1.11 billion for marijuana use prevention (which includes funding for anti-drug media campaigns and school-based drug testing programs), \$0.37 billion for marijuana treatment (which includes federal subsidies

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Domestic Pot Production Up, Cannabis Not Linked To Violence, Federal Report Says

Washington, DC: Domestic cultivation of cannabis is rising and is responsible for the majority of marijuana available in the United States, according to the National Drug Intelligence Center's (NDIC) latest "National Drug Threat Assessment" report.

The report states that domestic pot production levels are increasing and now range from 6,000 to 19,000 metric tons annually. Accordingly, the report notes that 98 percent of state and local law enforcement agencies describe the availability of marijuana in their area as "high or moderate."

Overall, the report estimates that anywhere from 12,000 to 25,000 metric tons of marijuana is available in the United States, up from previous estimates of 10,000 to 24,000 metric tons. Mexico remains the largest producer of cannabis imported into the US, followed by Canada, Colombia, and Jamaica, authors note.

The NDIC report also finds that few state and local law

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For content issues contact:

National NORML
1001 Connecticut Ave NW, #1010,
Washington, DC, 20009

(202) 483-5500
or visit their site at

www.norml.org

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A Voice for Responsible Marijuana Smokers

Since its founding in 1970, NORML has provided a voice in the public policy debate for those Americans who oppose marijuana prohibition and favor an end to the practice of arresting marijuana smokers. A nonprofit public-interest advocacy group, NORML represents the interests of the tens of millions of Americans who smoke marijuana responsibly.

During the 1970s, NORML led the successful efforts to decriminalize minor marijuana offenses in 11 states and significantly lower marijuana penalties in all others.

Today NORML continues to lead the fight to reform state and federal marijuana laws, whether by voter initiative or through the elected legislatures. NORML serves as an informational resource to the [national media](#) on marijuana-related stories, providing a perspective to offset the [anti-marijuana propaganda](#) from the government; lobbies state and federal legislators in support of reform legislation; publishes a regular [newsletter](#); hosts, along with the NORML Foundation, an informative web site and an [annual conference](#); and serves as the umbrella group for a national network of citizen-activists committed to ending marijuana prohibition and legalizing marijuana.

Their sister organization, [the NORML Foundation](#) sponsors public advertising campaigns to better educate the public about marijuana and alternatives to current marijuana policy; provides legal assistance and support to victims of the current laws; and undertakes relevant research.

The oldest and largest marijuana legalization organization in the country, NORML maintains a professional staff in Washington, DC, and a network of volunteer state and local [NORML Chapters](#) across the country. Check 'em out!

NORML's mission is to move public opinion sufficiently to achieve the repeal of marijuana prohibition so that the responsible use of cannabis by adults is no longer subject to penalty.

When marijuana is enjoyed responsibly, subjecting users to harsh criminal and civil penalties provides no public benefit and causes terrible injustices. For reasons of public safety, public health, economics and justice, the prohibition laws should be repealed to the extent that they criminalize responsible marijuana use.

NORML supports the right of adults to use marijuana responsibly, whether for [medical](#) or [personal](#) purposes. All penalties, both civil and criminal, should be eliminated for responsible use. NORML also supports the legalization of [hemp](#) (non-psychoactive marijuana) for industrial use. **To find out more, like how you can help, call, write or visit their website. You'll be glad you did!**

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- * **"Marijuana and violence are linked."**
- * **"Marijuana is a gateway drug."**
- * **"As a factor in emergency room visits, marijuana ... now surpasses heroin."**
- * **"Marijuana is not medicine, and no credible research suggests that it is."**
- * **"Smoked marijuana leads to changes in the brain similar to those caused by the use of cocaine and heroin."**
- * **"Marijuana legalization would be a nightmare for America."**

NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre said that the "The 2005 NORML Truth Report" relies on peer-reviewed science and federal statistics to refute the government's anti-marijuana claims, and accused the Bush administration of "purposely misrepresenting the available research in an attempt to justify federal and state policies that result in the arrest of more than 650,000 Americans annually on minor marijuana possession charges."

He continued: "NORML believes there is nothing to be gained by exaggerating claims of marijuana's harms. On the contrary, by overstating marijuana's potential risk, America's policy-makers and law enforcement community undermine their credibility and ability to effectively educate the public of the legitimate harms associated with more dangerous drugs."

"It's time to begin an honest public education campaign about the minimal risks presented by marijuana," St. Pierre concluded. "Let's allow science, not rhetoric, to dictate America's public policy regarding marijuana. As you will see, the facts speak for themselves."

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano, at (202) 483-5500. Read the report online at:

http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=5513

(HTML version) or

http://www.norml.org/pdf_files/NORML_Truth_Report_2005.pdf

(PDF version).

<continued from 4 BILLION, page 1 > for drug abuse treatment programs), and \$0.76 billion for marijuana-related policy research (funding for activities designed to improve the efficacy of federal drug control policies.)

The report notes that the actual federal spending on marijuana-related policies is likely higher than \$3.67 billion because the federal government no longer includes annual costs from federal agencies and programs that are not explicitly devoted to anti-drug activities (such as federal prison costs, salaries for federal law enforcement personnel, etc.).

State and local spending on anti-marijuana programs and activities weren't tabulated in the report. Previous estimates published by the NORML Foundation and others place these costs at between \$5 and \$7 billion per year.

"The ultimate measure of the drug war's worth is its impact on drug usage. By this standard, the federal marijuana program has fared poorly," said Taxpayers for Common Sense Senior Policy Analyst Erich Zimmermann.

"Despite spending billions of dollars over the years to enforce the prohibition of marijuana, use and perception of the drug are little different now than they were 30 years ago. ... Rather than continue to spend billions of dollars on the problem, it would be better for the US government to get out of the marijuana business entirely."

Full text of the report, "Federal Marijuana Policy: A Preliminary Analysis," is available online at:

<http://www.taxpayer.net/drugreform/intro.htm>

<continued from POT UP, page 1 > enforcement agencies identify marijuana as a serious threat to public safety. Less than five percent of US law enforcement agencies surveyed identified marijuana as a significant contributor to violent crime in their area, and most ranked methamphetamine and/or cocaine as far greater threats to public health and safety.

"[D]espite the volume of marijuana trafficked and used in [the United States,] ... the threat associated with [it] ... lags behind that associated with methamphetamine and cocaine, including crack," the report concludes. Authors add that an estimated 94 million Americans aged 12 or older have reported using cannabis, and "many of these users likely suffered no severe ill effects."

Full text of the NDIC report, "National Drug Threat Assessment 2005," is available online at:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs11/12620/>

Decreased Depression In Cannabis Users, Study Says

Los Angeles, CA: Adults who use cannabis report suffering from less severe incidents and/or symptoms of depression than non-users, according to survey data published last month in the journal Addictive Behaviors. Researchers at the University of Southern California analyzed survey results from 4,400 adults who had completed The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale (a numerical, self-report scale designed to assess symptoms of depression in the general population). Authors compared "depression scores" among those who consumed cannabis daily, once a week or less, or never in their lives.

"Despite comparable ranges of scores on all depression subscales, those who used once per week or less had less depressed mood, more positive affect, and fewer somatic (physical) complaints than non-users," authors wrote. "Daily users [also] reported less depressed mood and more positive affect than non-users."

Authors further noted that a separate analysis of medical cannabis users versus recreational users "demonstrated that medical users reported more depressed mood and more somatic complaints than recreational users, suggesting that medical conditions clearly contribute to depression scores and should be considered in studies of marijuana and depression.

"These data suggest that adults apparently do not increase their risk for depression by using marijuana," researchers concluded.

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the study, "Decreased depression in marijuana users," appears in the June issue of Addictive Behaviors.

Moderate Cannabis Use Not Associated With Cancer, Study Says

Clearwater, FL: Moderate use of cannabis is not associated with an elevated risk of developing lung and/or other types of upper aerodigestive tract cancers, according to preliminary data presented at the annual conference of the International Cannabinoid Research Society (ICRS).

Data presented from a retrospective, case controlled study of more than 1,200 adults with cancer of the pharynx, larynx and/or esophagus found that those

who reported using moderate levels of cannabis use had no greater odds of suffering from cancer than non-cannabis using controls.

"We failed to observe a positive association of marijuana use and other potential confounders," said Donald Tashkin of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

A previous large-scale case-controlled study performed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland revealed similar results, finding that "the balance of evidence ... does not favor the idea that marijuana as commonly used in the community is a major causal factor for head, neck, and lung cancer."

More recently, a 2004 study published in the journal Cancer Research concluded that cannabis use is not associated with an increased risk of developing oral cancer "regardless of how long, how much or how often a person has used marijuana."

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. A listing of presentations at this year's ICRS conference is available online at:

<http://www.cannabinoidsociety.org>

Cannabis No Stronger, British Medical Journal Says

Lisbon, Portugal: The average strength of European cannabis has not increased dramatically despite recent legal changes in several European nations liberalizing its use, according to an editorial in the July issue of the journal Addiction.

"[T]he evidence available suggest[s] that the potencies of resin and herbal cannabis that have been imported into Europe have shown little or no change, at least over the past ten years," authors determined.

The editorial further noted that cannabis potency was not linked to increased drug treatment demands, and questioned the claim that stronger cannabis necessarily poses a greater health risk to users.

Overall, European cannabis potency averaged between 2 percent and 8 percent THC, authors wrote. By contrast, the average potency of

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Since 2000, several European nations - including Belgium, Great Britain, and Portugal - have downgraded penalties for the possession and use of cannabis.

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the editorial, "Cannabis potency in Europe," appears in the July issue of Addiction.

Presence Of THC Metabolite Alone Not Evidence Of Driver Impairment, Court Says

Traverse City, MI: The presence of cannabis' primary metabolite, THC-COOH, is insufficient evidence of impairment to warrant a conviction under the state's "zero tolerance" *per se* drugged driving law, according to a recent ruling by the Michigan Court of Appeals. The decision upholds a trial court ruling that found the "prosecution must prove that the presence of a controlled substance in a defendant's body is proximate cause of an accident resulting in death or serious injury" in order for the defendant to be guilty of violating the state's two-year-old drugged driving statute.

Michigan is one of ten states that have enacted so-called "zero tolerance" drugged driving laws. Under Michigan's law, it is a criminal offense for an individual to operate a motor vehicle with any detectable level of a Schedule I substance present in his or her bodily fluids. (In six states - Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Nevada, and Utah - individuals may be criminally prosecuted if they operate a vehicle with any level of a Schedule I drug **or drug metabolite** in their system. Three additional states - Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Virginia - have enacted *per se* drugged driving standards, prohibiting individuals from operating a motor vehicle if they have levels of Schedule I drugs present in their body above a specific threshold.)

In the case before the court, the defendant tested positive for the presence of the THC metabolite THC-COOH (a non-psychoactive

compound produced during the body's biological process of converting THC into a water soluble form), but maintained that she was unimpaired at the time of her accident. The prosecution argued that it was not required under Michigan's "zero tolerance" drugged driving law to establish that the defendant's impairment caused the accident, only that she had an illegal substance present in her body. The appellate court upheld the trial court's ruling, affirming that marijuana's metabolite is neither psychoactive nor classified as an illegal substance, and that the prosecution had failed to prove a causal relationship between the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body and the accident.

Michigan's Supreme Court had previously held that the legislature did not "intend to impose strict liability on an individual" involved in a driving-related accident, the appellate court determined. Rather, the legislature's intent is to criminally punish only individuals whose impaired driving causes another person's injury.

"The defendant's purposeful operation of [a] vehicle while under the influence must have been a substantial cause of the victim's death," the court of appeals determined. It further found that the "legislature did not intend to include [the cannabis metabolite] as a Schedule I controlled substance because it has no pharmacological effect on the human body ... and its levels in the blood correlates poorly, if at all, to an individual's level of THC-related impairment."

As a result, the appellate court ruled, "Imposing a penalty on a driver when the ... accident would have occurred regardless of that intoxication would ... fail to serve the purpose of the statute."

Prosecutors have not announced whether they intend to appeal the court's decision to the Michigan Supreme Court.

For more information, please contact either Paul Armentano or Keith Stroup of NORML at (202) 483-5500. A comprehensive breakdown of state drugged driving laws appears in NORML's report, "You Are Going Directly to Jail: DUID Legislation: What It Means, Who's Behind It, and Strategies to Prevent It," available online at:

http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=6492

Jamaican Parliament May Consider Decrim

Kingston, Jamaica: Government officials are once again promising to consider legislation to liberalize Jamaica's cannabis laws. If a bill is introduced, legislative hearings could take place as early as this fall.

Similar pronouncements from government officials in 2002 and 2004 failed to result in legislative action from Parliament, despite a 2001 report from the National Commission on Ganja recommending that it depenalize the possession and use of small quantities of cannabis for adults.

In 2003, former NORML Executive Director Keith Stroup testified before Parliament in support of the National Commission's recommendations.

Under current Jamaican law, possession of even one marijuana cigarette is a criminal offense punishable by up to ten days in jail.

For more information, please contact either Paul Armentano or Keith Stroup of NORML at (202) 483-5500.

Wives Influence Husbands' Pot Use, Study Says

Buffalo, NY: Wives tend to strongly influence their husband's decision to use or not use marijuana during the first two years of marriage, according to survey data published in the spring issue of the *Journal of Drug Issues*. Conversely, husbands' attitudes toward cannabis use do not significantly influence wives' marijuana use habits, the study found.

Nearly 500 couples participated in the longitudinal study, which assessed spouses' marijuana use at the time of marriage, and then again at the couples' first and second year wedding anniversaries.

For both men and women, self-reported prevalence of marijuana use decreased over the transition to marriage. Among women, self-reported cannabis use fell from 20 percent at

the time of marriage to 12.5 percent two years later. Among men, self-reported cannabis use declined from 25.5 percent to 19 percent. However, among respondents whose wives used marijuana at either of the first two assessments, husbands "were more likely to start using marijuana at the next assessment." Spouse's cannabis use "did not play a significant role in their wives' initiation of marijuana use," researchers found. Overall, authors concluded, "In both cessation and initiation, wives appear to affect their husbands' [cannabis] use more often than the converse."

Researchers also noted that individuals who used cannabis were commonly married to partners who also used it.

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the study, "Changes in marijuana use over the transition into marriage," is available in the spring issue of the Journal of Drug Issues.

Federal Judge Rules Agents Don't Have To Return Property To Authorized Medi-Pot Patient

Denver, CO: A US District Court judge ruled yesterday that federal law enforcement officers cannot be held in contempt for failing to follow a state judge's order to return medical cannabis and grow equipment seized from a state-licensed patient.

"I find that (the agents) were performing acts that were authorized or that they reasonably believed were authorized by valid federal law," US District Court Judge Walker Miller decided.

In 2003, six federal law enforcement agents raided the home of Donald Nord, seizing three cannabis plants and marijuana paraphernalia. A county court judge later dismissed state charges against Nord, who is authorized by the Colorado Department of Public Health to possess and use medical cannabis to treat chronic pain and other symptoms related to cancer and diabetes, and ordered his property

returned. Federal law enforcement officials denied the court's order, and petitioned the US District Court to dismiss the criminal contempt of court citation. Refusing to return Nord's cannabis and other items is consistent with federal law, the US District Court ruled.

For more information, please contact Allen St. Pierre, NORML Executive Director, at (202) 483-5500.

Former Ogilvy & Mather Execs Sentenced To Prison For Inflating Costs Of Feds' Anti-Pot Ads

New York, NY: Former Ogilvy & Mather executives Shona Seifert and Thomas Early have both been sentenced to prison for their roles in defrauding the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Seifert was sentenced to 18 months in prison and fined \$125,000 dollars. Early was sentenced to 14 months in prison and ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine. Both executives were convicted in February of ten counts of conspiracy and filing false claims against the federal government.

The White House Drug Czar's office hired Ogilvy & Mather in 1998 to create public service announcements for its \$1.2 billion "National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign." The duo were later found to have altered employees' time-sheets, billing the ONDCP for more than 3,100 hours worth of work that had not taken place.

Ogilvy & Mather had previously agreed in 2002 to a civil settlement with the US Justice Department regarding the overbilling. Despite the scandal, the White House continued to pay the firm to produce its anti-drug public service announcements until last year. A four-year evaluation of the federal ad campaign, performed by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, found that it fails to alter teens' perceptions of marijuana or reduce its use among young people. *For more information, please contact either Paul Armentano or Keith Stroup of NORML at (202) 483-5500.*

Renee Boje Denied Refugee Status

Ottawa, Ontario: The appeal of American expatriate Renee Boje was denied yesterday by Canadian Justice Minister Irving Colter, who has ordered Boje to turn herself in to federal authorities to face extradition to the United States. Boje had been free on bail in Canada while she appealed a February 2000 British Columbia Supreme Court decision ruling that she be extradited to the United States to face marijuana conspiracy charges for her alleged role in 1997 California marijuana case involving over 1,000 marijuana plants.

Boje, along with her Canadian husband and Canadian-born two-year-old son, is expected to turn herself in to authorities later today. Boje's lawyer will request that she remain in Canada and free on bail while they challenge the Justice Minister's decision. If indicted federally in the United States, Boje could face a mandatory sentence of up to ten years in prison.

In his decision, Colter wrote: "The conduct alleged against Ms. Boje is that she was tending and watering some of the 4,116 marijuana plants being grown in a private, rented mansion in Bel Air, California. I am not satisfied that this conduct can be viewed as an expression of political opinion."

He added, "In my view, neither Ms. Boje's belief that her actions were legal [under California's medical marijuana law,] nor the possible conflict between state and federal legislation in the United States of America raise a basis to refuse surrender on the facts of this case." Colter concluded, "I am not persuaded by the length of the sentence that Ms. Boje may serve if convicted nor the conditions under which she may serve it would amount to cruel and unusual punishment such that they would shock the Canadian conscience and compel me to refuse her surrender."

Boje filed for refugee status in Canada in 1998 after US federal agents raided the home of cancer survivor and medical <continued next page>



From your National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

<continued from previous page> cannabis patient Todd McCormick, with whom Boje had a working relationship. McCormick served four years in federal prison for conspiracy to manufacture and distribute marijuana.

Boje has been living in Canada, where she owns her own business, for the past eight years.

To read the text of the decision, visit:
<http://americanmarijuana.org/boje/Boje.Decision.pdf>

To listen to an interview with Renee, visit:
<http://www.drugtruth.net/MP3/reneeboje061605.mp3>

NORML Mourns Passing Of Steve McWilliams

San Diego, CA: The NORML staff mourns the passing of longtime medical marijuana activist and patient Steve McWilliams, who took his own life earlier this week after suffering from years of ill health and federal persecution.

Friends of McWilliams, who was co-director of San Diego's Shelter from the Storm cannabis dispensary and an original member of the city's Medicinal Cannabis Task Force, report that he had grown increasingly depressed in recent weeks.

In 2003, McWilliams was sentenced to six months in federal prison for maintaining a modest 20-plant garden in his home in compliance with California law. McWilliams had been free on bond, pending appeal, but was forbidden by the terms of his probation

from using medicinal cannabis, which he used under a doctor's supervision to treat chronic pain. Following last month's Supreme Court decision affirming the federal government's authority to prosecute state-authorized medical cannabis patients for violating the federal Controlled Substances Act, McWilliams had become increasingly worried that he would be ordered to serve out his federal prison sentence.

He had been experiencing a great deal of pain and had expressed concern to friends that he would not be able to survive his sentence because of his deteriorating health.

Responding to McWilliams' passing, NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre said: "While cannabis use can't cause death, cannabis prohibition can and does. The federal government's persecution of Steve McWilliams for using medicinal cannabis was needless, cruel, and clearly played a role in his untimely death. A government for and by the people should never force sick and dying patients like Steve into confronting such a disturbing Hobson's choice."

Added California NORML Coordinator Dale Gieringer, "Steve was a courageous fighter for the cause and he will be sorely missed." Evening vigils are scheduled to be held nationwide in honor of Steve McWilliams on Tuesday, July 19, 2005. McWilliams is survived by his longtime partner Barbara MacKenzie.