



COUNTY OF SISKIYOU OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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For immediate release:

Opinion Editorial: Asking for a NO vote on Proposition 64

Rarely will you find on a ballot a proposition as polarizing as the legalization of marijuana. In the State of California possession and use of marijuana for medicinal purposes is already permissible with an easy-to-obtain physician's recommendation. What Proposition 64 represents is an effort to legalize possession and use of marijuana for recreational purposes. It is common to look at this issue as 'pro-marijuana people should vote yes and anti-marijuana people should vote no.' It is not so simple. There are many negatives that make this proposition bad for California regardless of how you personally feel about marijuana.

The effort to legalize marijuana, which has been bankrolled chiefly by Sean Parker, the millionaire founder of Napster, to the tune of over \$6 million, seems to have momentum. This is partly because there is no unified voice telling the truth about the impact that legal recreational marijuana would have in our state. The truth about marijuana legalization should influence a broad spectrum of voters to oppose Prop 64, including:

- **Those who value the environment:** EQ Research, a clean energy policy research company, has issued new findings that marijuana cultivation accounts for as much as 1 percent of the statewide energy use in Colorado and Washington since those states legalized recreational marijuana. They estimate that the energy need there may soon rival that of big data centers, which emit approximately 100 million metric tons of carbon into the atmosphere each year. Kelly Crandall, the report's author, describes the marijuana industry's energy use as "immense." She also notes that this industry has particular difficulty in switching to energy efficient options.

As I drove recently through from Yosemite west and then north toward home I was struck by the amazing percentage of dead and dying evergreens. Drought conditions and the resulting insect infestation account for this devastating phenomenon, which is moving northward. I was struck by the irony that tens of thousands of gallons of water in every north state county are being diverted illegally to nourish marijuana plants. Whether legal or not, sucking streams, rivers and wells dry to feed the recreational use of a drug seems ludicrous. Where is the cry among environmentalists for an environmental impact report on this industry?

- **Those who drive on the roads:** There are statistics to inform Californians about what to expect if Prop 64 passes. In September 2016 the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA) in Colorado, which legalized recreational marijuana beginning in 2013, released shocking statistics that it has been tracking. (Read the entire report at www.RMHIDTA.org, click on “reports”).
 - Marijuana-related traffic deaths have increased **48 percent** in the 3 years since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the 3 previous years.
 - In 2015 the percentage of all Colorado traffic deaths involving operators testing positive for marijuana was a staggering **21 percent**, and increase of over 100% in 6 years. This statistic is virtually identical to the experience in the State of Washington.
 - The State of Washington has experienced a similar surge. Drivers in fatal accidents with THC (the active hallucinogenic ingredient in marijuana) in their systems increased **122.2 percent** from 2010 to 2014.
 - In Washington marijuana-related incidents of driving under the influence increased **400 percent** from 2012 to 2014. While marijuana-only DUIs increased **460 percent** in the same time period.
 - Individual tragedies regarding people killed on Colorado and Washington roads by drivers high on marijuana, many of which have been published, are devastating and heart-breaking.

- **Those who see marijuana as a dangerous drug:** The RMHIDTA report noted that college kids past month marijuana use increased **17 percent** in the 2 years after legalization, 15% more than the national average. Since legalization, both college-age adults and adults generally in Colorado have ascended to #1 in the nation in past month marijuana use. If California passes Prop 64 it will be as though we are trying to ‘catch up’ to Colorado.

- **Those, including medicinal users, who don’t want their marijuana taxed:** Prop 64 would impose a 15% excise tax on all marijuana, medicinal or recreational. Local jurisdictions may also levy a tax on marijuana. This has caused many outspoken California marijuana advocates to urge a ‘no vote’ on Prop 64 because of the regulation it would bring. Prop 64 identifies 19 different kinds of licenses that would-be cultivators or dispensaries would have to obtain in order to lawfully operate.

- **Those who don’t want to see the marijuana industry run like ‘big tobacco’:** Since many localities would likely ban the commercial cultivation of marijuana the industry would be concentrated in areas that permit such cultivation. Many north-state marijuana advocates have been quoted expressing fears that this will drive small growers out of business as huge growers concentrate their operations where it is permitted, and have the funds to dominate the industry with low cost production.

- **Those who believe that breaking the law should have a real consequence:** Whereas

violations of the law currently may be prosecuted as felonies, under Prop 64 even the most brazen and massive violation of the law (possession of marijuana for sale, cultivation of marijuana, and illegal hand to hand sales of marijuana) could virtually never be prosecuted as anything but a misdemeanor. This means that there would be no punishment and no justice system incentive for anyone to comply with the law.

- **Those who don't want to have more kids use, or be exposed to, marijuana:** The RMHIDTA reports that youth past-month use of marijuana in Colorado increased **20 percent** in the 2 years following legalization, while nationwide it actually decreased 4%. The same report notes that Colorado youth ranked #1 in the nation for such marijuana use after being ranked #14 just 8 years prior. Colorado youth marijuana use was 74% higher than the national average in the 2 years after legalization. Prop 64 is not an adult issue. There is no question that many more young people will have access to, and use, marijuana if it is legalized.

Even more striking statistics involve children physically exposed to marijuana. Marijuana-related exposures among children ages 0-5 increased **169 percent** after recreational marijuana was legalized in Colorado. More than 75% of these exposures involved children younger than 3 years old accidentally swallowing marijuana as an ingredient in food items.

- **Health care consumers and providers:** Marijuana legalization has had a massive impact on health care in Colorado. From 2013 to 2014 Emergency room visits related to marijuana went from 14,148 to 18,255. Hospitalizations related to marijuana in Colorado were 6,715 in 2012, 8,272 in 2013 and 11,439 in 2014. Hospital rates likely related to marijuana increased **32 percent** in the two years following legalization.
- **Those who value public safety:** Just 3 weeks ago District Attorney Michell R. Morrissey, of Denver, Colorado, issued a frightening forecast for Californians. He warned that the number of crimes in Denver has grown by 44% since recreational marijuana was legalized there. In Colorado, legalization has seen more placed robbed, more thefts, more sexual assaults, more aggravated assaults, more homes broken into, and the murder rate has hit a high for the decade. Furthermore, legalizing recreational marijuana will NOT free up law enforcement to do other things. The Denver Police Department has seen a 900% increase in unlawful cultivation and manufacture of marijuana concentrate. And the average quantity of illegal marijuana seized per case has increased 3,424%. Legalization of recreational marijuana has been a disaster in Colorado.

It is a fact that if Prop 64 passes California will be a more dangerous place to be, especially for children. Our environment will experience a massive impact where and when it can be least afforded. The sad experiences of Colorado and Washington, and undoubtedly Oregon as well once they have compiled recent data, should serve as a warning to Californians who would blithely follow the path they have trod, a course bearing a heavy human and environmental toll. Your vote on Prop 64 has little to do with how you feel about marijuana, or even how serious

you believe its impacts are on the human body. The collective picture from all perspectives shows that any perceived benefits would be lost in a haze of negative impacts that would serve as a net loss for all Californians, including the hungry profiteers who pine for legalization.

I urge a 'no' vote primarily because of my constitutional role to protect the public, which role—and local safety itself—would both be compromised were Prop 64 to pass. Please vote no.

Respectfully,

KIRK ANDRUS
DISTRICT ATTORNEY