

THE **NORML** NEWS

your National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

Register Voters and Get Ready

2005 Marijuana Law Reform Legislation Introduced In States Nationwide

Washington, DC: Over a dozen state legislatures will be debating proposals to liberalize state marijuana penalties this spring. Already, several state bills to depenalize the possession of small amounts of cannabis for personal use and/or to legalize the medicinal use of marijuana under a physician's supervision have been introduced, and several more are pending. Below is a summary of this year's more prominent state legislative proposals.

Medical Marijuana

Bills to legalize the use of medicinal marijuana by qualified patients are currently before the legislatures of Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, New Jersey, New Mexico and Tennessee. In Texas, lawmakers are also debating a proposal to allow medicinal cannabis patients
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Science Refutes Latest Marijuana And Cognition Claim

Washington, DC: Research published this week in the journal *Neurology* speculating that marijuana's effects on the cerebrovascular system may bring about residual cognitive deficits in longtime users is not supported by the majority of available clinical evidence.

Numerous prior reviews of marijuana's potential impact on neurocognitive performance include:

A 2003 meta-analysis published in the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* that "failed to reveal a substantial, systematic effect of long-term, regular cannabis consumption on the neurocognitive functioning of users who were not acutely intoxicated;"

A 2002 clinical trial published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* that
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Cannabis To Be Tested As Crohn's Disease Treatment

Munich, Germany: Researchers at the University Hospital of Munich have begun the first ever clinical patient trial examining the efficacy of cannabis extracts as a treatment for Crohn's disease, according to a press release issued by the hospital. Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammation of the intestine, characterized by severe abdominal pain, nausea, and weight loss.

Clinical research published last year by the Max Planck Institute for Psychiatry in Munich found that cannabinoids prevent an experimental inflammation of the colon in animals. Researchers in Italy had previously speculated that modulating "the endogenous cannabinoid system could provide new therapeutics for the treatment of a number of gastrointestinal diseases," including gastric ulcers and Crohn's disease.

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500.
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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!**

<continued from LAW, page 1 > to raise an affirmative defense of medical necessity at trial. Next week, legislation protecting medical cannabis patients from state prosecution is scheduled to be introduced in Alabama and Ohio, while similar bills are anticipated to be introduced in Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

Decriminalization

To date, two states are considering bills to remove criminal penalties for the possession of minor amounts of marijuana. In New Hampshire, House Bill 197 seeks to remove marijuana from the state's "Controlled Drug Act" so that individuals found in possession of cannabis will no longer face criminal penalties. The bill is currently before the House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, where it is scheduled to be heard next week. In Texas, lawmakers are considering legislation, House Bill 254, to reduce the penalties on the possession of up to one ounce of marijuana to a Class C misdemeanor. If passed by the legislature, individuals charged with simple marijuana possession will face a ticket and a fine in lieu of criminal prosecution.

For detailed information on these state bills or other related legislation, or to receive legislative "action alerts" and/or to send letters in support of marijuana law reform, please visit: <http://capwiz.com/norml2/issues/>

<continued from SCIENCE REFUTES, page 1 > determined, "Marijuana does not have a long-term negative impact on global intelligence;"

A 2001 study published in the journal Archives of General Psychiatry that found that long-term cannabis smokers who abstained from the drug for one week "showed virtually no significant differences from control subjects (those who had smoked marijuana less than 50 times in their lives) on a battery of 10 neuropsychological tests." Researchers added, "Former heavy users, who had consumed little or no cannabis in the three months before testing, [also] showed no significant differences from control subjects on any of these tests on any of the testing days;"

A 1999 clinical trial published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that found "no significant differences in cognitive decline between heavy users, light users, and nonusers of cannabis" over a 15-year period.

More recently, a study published last fall in the journal Psychological Medicine examining the potential long-term residual effects of cannabis on cognition in monozygotic male twins reported "an absence of marked long-term residual effects of marijuana use on cognitive abilities."

In addition, a scientific review published earlier this month in the journal Current Opinion in Pharmacology concluded, "There is little evidence... that long-term cannabis uses causes permanent cognitive impairment. ...Overall, by comparison with other drugs used mainly for 'recreational' purposes, cannabis could be rated a relatively safe drug."

For more information, please contact Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500.

Drug Use Surveys Often Found Unreliable, Study Says

Belfast, Northern Ireland: Survey results estimating the prevalence of drug use among young people are unreliable because of undetected reporting errors, according to the results of a longitudinal study published in the current issue of the journal Addiction. A research team at the Institute of Child Care Research at Queens University in Belfast found that adolescents fail to consistently report their drug use over a multi-year period. Authors discovered that many respondents initially admit to having used illicit drugs and then deny their use on subsequent surveys.

"In general, as the social stigma of the drug increased so, too, did the proportion of previous reports that were recanted," authors wrote, noting that the consistency of positive life-time reporting was highest for more socially accepted substances such as alcohol

<continued from previous page> (93%), tobacco (90%), and cannabis (83%), while it was lowest for psychedelic mushrooms (87%), heroin (85%) and cocaine (82%). Specific to marijuana, authors found that drug education was associated with increased recanting by respondents.

"The possibility of drug education biasing drug use reporting, via increased recanting independent of actual behavior change, may have substantive implications for the evaluation of drug education itself," authors wrote. "It could be argued that evaluation studies showing a positive effect from drug education (i.e. a decline in reported drug use in an intervention group relative to a control group) may in fact be reporting differences in the willingness of young people to give truthful answers to the drug use questions rather than changes in willingness to use illicit substances."

Researchers concluded: "The high levels of recanting uncovered cast doubts on the reliability of drug use reports from young adolescents. Failure to address this response error may lead to biased prevalence estimates, particularly within school surveys and drug education evaluation trials."

In the United States, politicians and researchers rely primarily on two annual self-report surveys to estimate drug use among the nation's population: the Monitoring the Future project at the University of Michigan (which measures the prevalence of drug use among adolescents) and the US Department of Health and Human Services' National Survey on Drug Use & Health (which measures the prevalence of drug use among all age groups).

In the former, results are estimated by administering a questionnaire to students in a classroom setting. In the latter, federal researchers administer questionnaires to residents through face-to-face interviews at their home. In both cases, however, researchers have expressed concern that the social stigma associated with drug use

provides a powerful disincentive for respondents to provide truthful self-reports. For example, according to a White House briefing paper analyzing SAMHSA's figures regarding Americans alcohol and tobacco use, respondents were shown to have under-reported their usage by as much as 30 to 50 percent.

"It is troubling that so many politicians and bureaucrats continue to base the perceived success and/or failure of America's \$40 billion per year drug policies primarily on the basis of these social surveys' estimates," said NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre, "particularly when the surveys themselves have time and time again shown to be an unreliable way to accurately measure drug use."

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

One-Third Fewer Britons Arrested For Marijuana Under Reclassification

London, United Kingdom: Marijuana possession arrests declined sharply in 2004 following the enactment of national legal reforms downgrading marijuana from a Class B to a Class C "soft" drug.

According to data released this week by the British Home Office, police made 24,875 fewer pot possession arrests in 2004 than in 2003, a decrease of 36 percent from last year's total of 68,625 arrests. The Office estimated that the reduction in arrests saved an estimated 199,000 hours of police work.

"A year ago we reclassified cannabis on the recommendation of the advisory council on the misuse of drugs, so that the police could concentrate on the far more destructive Class A drugs," Home Office minister Caroline Flint said. "One year [later] the picture is

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Under Britain's reclassification scheme, which took effect last January, individuals found possessing minor amounts of marijuana are verbally cautioned by police, but no longer arrested. (Police do retain the discretion to make an arrest under special "aggravated" circumstances, such as if marijuana is smoked on school grounds or if the marijuana possessed is deemed to be for purposes other than personal use.)

In the United States, 12 states have enacted laws decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Under those laws, offenders are cited and fined for possessing marijuana in lieu of a criminal arrest and prosecution.

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

Belgium: Court Clarifies That Cannabis Smokers Are To Receive Verbal Warning; And Keep The Cannabis

Brussels, Belgium: Police will issue a verbal warning to anyone found in possession of three grams or less of marijuana, in accordance with new nation wide guidelines which took effect this week. Under the new guidelines, law enforcement is instructed not to confiscate the marijuana.

The new policy clarifies a 2003 law liberalizing the possession and private use of small quantities of marijuana, but which had been struck down by the Courts last year as overly vague. The new guidelines are expected to stay in effect until Parliament approves an amended version of the 2003 law.

For a summary of European cannabis laws, please visit: http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=5445

Efficacy Of Student Drug Testing Not Backed By Evidence, Study Says

Layerthorpe, United Kingdom: There exists little "high-quality evidence" to support the premise that student drug testing deters drug use, and there are indications that the procedure may be "potentially damaging" to youth drug prevention efforts, according to a study released this week in Britain by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

"Whilst the theory behind [random student] drug testing is plausible enough, the evidence for it is remarkably thin," says the report. It notes that "very few independent and rigorous evaluations have been conducted to identify the impact of drug testing programs in school," and that among those studies that have taken place, "The evidence that programs lead to a reduction in use is far from conclusive."

For example, a 2004 US federal study of 76,000 students by the University of Michigan's Institute of Social Research found no difference in illegal drug use among students in schools that drug test versus those that do not.

The Rowntree report further warns that imposing suspicionless, random drug testing upon students could be a "potentially damaging" approach to drug prevention because the program "could undermine trust between pupils and staff," and "encourage some pupils to switch from [the] use of cannabis ... that can be traced a relatively long time after use, to drugs that are cleared from the body much more quickly, including heroin."

The report concluded that UK government officials should "avoid the ad hoc proliferation of random [student] drug testing programs until such time as there are clear data on effectiveness."

The publication of the Rowntree study came on the same day that the White House released its 2005 "National Drug Strategy," which calls for a record \$25.4 million <continued next page>

<continued from previous page> in federal tax dollars to be spent "supporting schools in the design and implementation of [drug testing] programs designed to screen selected students randomly." The White House report further states that the US government had previously funded the implementation of suspicionless student drug testing programs in 79 middle school and high schools, and hopes to greatly increase the number of schools that employ drug testing - calling it "powerful, safe, and effective."

Responding to the White House's support for student drug testing, the Rowntree report commented, "Testing programs have been developed in the United States in advance of the research needed to assess their efficacy."

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, entitled "Random Drug Testing of Schoolchildren: A shot in the arm or a shot in the foot for drug prevention," is available online at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1859352839.pdf>

Cannabinoids Stave Off Alzheimer's Decline, Study Says

Madrid, Spain: Cannabinoids prevent the neurodegenerative decline associated with Alzheimer's disease in animals and in human brain tissue, according to clinical trial data published in the current issue of the Journal of Neuroscience.

Researchers at Madrid's Complutense University and the Cajal Institute reported that the intracerebroventricular administration of synthetic cannabinoids prevented cognitive impairment and decreased neurotoxicity in rats, and reduced the inflammation associated with Alzheimer's disease in human brain tissue. "Our results indicate that cannabinoid receptors are important in the pathology of Alzheimer's disease and that cannabinoids succeed in preventing the neurodegenerative process occurring in the disease," authors concluded.

Findings published last summer by Complutense researchers reported that cannabinoids inhibit malignant brain tumor growth in animals, and may provide a potential therapy for human glioma patients. Recent reviews published by the Society for Neuroscience and in the journal Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America have noted that cannabinoids may be clinically useful in the treatment of several neurodegenerative disorders, including Alzheimers, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and Parkinson's disease.

Previous human trials on synthetic THC (Marinol) and Alzheimer's found that administration of the drug reduced agitation and stimulated weight gain in patients suffering from the disease.

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500.

Former Ogilvy & Mather Execs Found Guilty Of Overbilling Drug Czar's Office For Anti-Pot Ads

Washington, DC: Former Ogilvy & Mather executives Shona Seifert and Thomas Early each face up to five years in prison after being found guilty this week on 10 counts that they defrauded the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

While at Ogilvy & Mather, the ad firm hired by the Drug Czar's Office to create ad spots for the \$1.2 billion "National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign," the duo conspired to doctor time-sheets to fraudulently increase the number of hours billed to the ONDCP, prosecutors charged.

A 2001 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that time-sheets for 28 Ogilvy & Mather employees were altered to reflect more than 3,100 hours worth of work that had not taken place. The firm had previously agreed to a civil settlement with the US Justice Department in 2002 regarding the overbilling.

The White House had continued to pay Ogilvy & Mather to produce anti-drug public service announcements until last year.

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

Cannabis Becoming A 'Minor' Offense In EU, Study Says

Lisbon, Portugal: A growing number of European nations are amending their laws to treat the possession of small quantities of cannabis and other drugs as "minor" offenses punishable by non-criminal sanctions, according to a report released this week by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon.

"In the EU Member States, notwithstanding different positions and attitudes, we can see a trend to conceive the illicit use of drugs as a relatively 'minor' offense, to which it is not adequate to apply 'sanctions involving deprivation of liberty,'" the report concludes.

Among EU nations, the Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, and Spain have laws forbidding the incarceration of defendants found to be in the possession of small amounts of cannabis or other drugs, absent aggravating circumstances. Several other countries - including Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands - have enacted similar policies specific to cannabis possession.

However, the EMCDDA report states the implementation of administrative, non-criminal sanctions for minor drug offenders has not cut down on the number of individuals cited for minor drug law infractions - noting that over 50 percent of all reported drug offenses in the EU are for drug use and/or possession only, primarily for cannabis. (For example, 86 percent of all drug offenses in France in 2001 were for marijuana, the report found.)

Nevertheless, authors reported, "Even though the use and possession of drugs for personal use are among the majority of drug related offenses reported to the judiciary, indeed the courts seem to prefer treatment [or] other social support measures and to a certain extent sanctions not involving deprivation of liberty ... when simple use of drugs is not accompanied by aggravating circumstances."

They concluded, "In these countries, prison sentences do not seem to be the most effective instrument to prevent (and punish) drug use." NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre said that he found the EU's rejection of America's "Do Drugs-Do Time" drug policies encouraging, but added, "A policy that taxes and regulates cannabis in a manner similar to wine and other spirits is necessary if European nations are ever going to see a substantial reduction in the arrests and prosecutorial costs related to minor marijuana offenses."

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the report, entitled "Illicit Drug Use in the EU: Legislative Approaches," is available online at: <http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nnodeid=7079>

Ohio Senate Passes Ominous "Drugged Driving" Bill

Columbus, OH: The Ohio Senate voted 30-1 yesterday to approve legislation (SB 8) criminally sanctioning any person who operates a motor vehicle if trace levels of marijuana or non-psychoactive marijuana metabolites (compounds produced from the chemical changes of a drug in the body) are present in their blood or urine.

NORML Senior Policy Analyst Paul Armentano strongly criticized the proposed legislation, which is scheduled to be debated in the House next week, arguing that it improperly defines and punishes sober drivers as if they are impaired. "Because marijuana's main metabolite, THC-COOH, remains detectable in certain bodily fluids, particularly urine, for days and sometimes weeks after past use, this legislation seeks to define sober drivers as if they were intoxicated," he said. "Someone who smokes marijuana is <continued next page>



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<continued from previous page> impaired as a driver at most for a few hours, certainly not for days or weeks. To treat all marijuana smokers as if they are impaired, even when the drug's effects have long worn off, is illogical and unfair."

Similar laws classifying motorists who test positive for trace amount of illicit drugs or drug metabolites in their bodily fluids as criminally impaired have been enacted in twelve US states: Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wisconsin.

In January, a German law defining motorists with any detectable level of drugs or marijuana (THC) in their blood as per se impaired was struck down by the German Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Additional information on Ohio's proposed law is available online at: <http://capwiz.com/norml2/issues/alert/?alertid=6857541>

Ex-Cop To Ride Horseback Across US To Promote Drug Law Reform

Los Angeles, CA: A former police officer and founding member of the organization Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) is embarking next month on a cross-country trek to raise awareness to the harms caused by criminal drug prohibition.

Howard Wooldridge, a 16-year veteran of the Bath Township, Michigan police force, will be traveling by horseback from Los Angeles to New York City on a speaking tour promoting alternatives to current US drug policies.

"By fighting a war on drugs the government has increased the problems of society and made them far worse," says Wooldridge. "A system of regulation rather than prohibition is a less harmful, more ethical and a more effective public policy."

A coalition of national and grassroots drug law reform organizations, including Oklahoma NORML, the November Coalition, Americans for Safe Access, and Students for a Sensible Drug Policy, are assisting Wooldridge with his effort, which is scheduled to begin on March 5, 2005.

For more information, please contact Norma Sapp of Oklahoma NORML at 405-321-4619 or email: ekco@swbell.net

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