

Arizona law enforcement: Marijuana shouldn't be legalized

A majority of Arizona's sheriffs and county attorneys have now approved a resolution opposing the legalization of marijuana in Arizona.

Among the 22 points in the detailed resolution opposing legalization:

- If marijuana were legalized an additional 32,000 high-school students in Arizona would be more likely to use marijuana
- Driving while impaired by marijuana is correlated with an increased chance of being at fault in a crash
- Teens who use marijuana heavily are more likely to develop mental illness such as schizophrenia
- Marijuana use can impact safety and productivity in the workplace
- Marijuana is particularly harmful to the developing adolescent brain
- Marijuana significantly diminishes IQ over time
- Risky behavior increases with marijuana use
- Marijuana use is associated with additional health risks such as respiratory illness, heightened heart attack risk, and immune suppression

Two pages of references were included in the resolution, summarizing the research supporting these conclusions. The resolution also stated "... Be it further resolved that we support public education on the harms of marijuana, and proven prevention interventions such as community-based drug prevention efforts, drug treatment courts, offender re-entry programs and probation reform; and further support making drug treatment available to all who need it."

Most sheriffs and county attorneys voted "aye," according to Jen Marson, executive director of the Arizona Association of Counties. Coconino Sheriff William Pribil abstained from the vote; law enforcement officials from Apache and Santa Cruz counties were absent. The resolution was sponsored by MATFORCE, an organization that aims to end substance abuse. Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery said he supported the resolution "to ensure a full and fair discussion in the debate over marijuana and other drugs." He said advocates of marijuana legalization have "left a gross misimpression of the real physical, mental and emotional harm" caused by marijuana.

See the resolution at:

<http://archive.azcentral.com/ic/pdf/resolution-opposing-legalization-marijuana.pdf>

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RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA
PRIMARY SPONSOR: MATFORCE

WHEREAS we are committed to the success and positive future of our youth; and

WHEREAS marijuana, like cigarettes, is addictive;ⁱ and

WHEREAS teen recent use of marijuana has been on the rise in Arizona since 2007;ⁱⁱ and

WHEREAS marijuana use is harmful to the adolescent brain, affecting the parts of the brain that influence pleasure, memory, thinking, concentration, sensory and time perception, and coordinated movement;ⁱⁱⁱ and

WHEREAS teens who smoke marijuana regularly can see an 8 point drop in IQ by the time they reach 38 putting a person of average intelligence into the lowest third of the IQ range;^{iv} and

WHEREAS marijuana use can lead to poorer academic performance in high school and enrollment gaps in college;^v and

WHEREAS teens who use marijuana heavily are more likely to develop mental illness such as schizophrenia;^{vi} and

WHEREAS marijuana use reduces inhibitions and can lead to risky behaviors, distorted perception, impaired coordination, and can cause difficulty with thinking, problem-solving and difficulty with learning and memory;^{vii} and

WHEREAS, according to the 2012 Arizona Youth Survey,^{viii}

- 2012 was the first time in Arizona's history that past 30-day use of marijuana by teens surpassed their use of cigarettes; and
- Marijuana is one of only two substances whose use is on the rise among Arizona teens; and
- The perception of marijuana's risks by Arizona's youth - both users and non-users of marijuana - is decreasing and their use is increasing; and

WHEREAS, if marijuana were legalized an additional 32,000 high school students in Arizona would be more likely to use marijuana;^{ix} and

WHEREAS we are committed to the health and safety of our citizens; and

WHEREAS marijuana use is associated with additional health risks such as respiratory illness, heightened heart attack risk, and immune system suppression;^x and

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WHEREAS the active ingredient in marijuana is already the second most commonly found substance in the blood of impaired drivers;^{xi} and

WHEREAS driving while impaired by marijuana is correlated with an increased likelihood of being at fault in a crash;^{xii} and

WHEREAS marijuana is the second leading substance for which people seek drug treatment and a driving force behind emergency room visits;^{xiii} and

WHEREAS marijuana legalization would lead to increased marijuana consumption;^{xiv} and

WHEREAS we are committed to the economic health and competitiveness of our region; and


WHEREAS marijuana use can affect workplace safety and productivity;^{xv} and

WHEREAS marijuana use leads to higher health and safety costs.^{xvi}

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we oppose the legalization of marijuana; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we support public education on the harms of marijuana, and proven prevention interventions such as community-based drug prevention efforts, drug treatment courts, offender re-entry programs and probation reform; and further support making drug treatment available to all who need it.

Signed this 16th day of July, 2014.

By: 
Leon Wilmot, President
Arizona County Attorney and Sheriffs Association
Yuma County Sheriff

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¹ "Two New Studies Conclude Marijuana Use Connected to College Failure," Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America; March 28, 2013.

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Bergland, Christopher, "Heavy Marijuana Use Alters Teenage Brain Structure," *Psychology Today*; December 16, 2013.

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For quick reference, see "Drug Facts: Marijuana": National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse; January 2014, available at:
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⁴ "Arizona Youth Survey: State Report," Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, 2012.

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⁵ This prediction by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission is an extrapolation based on the date included in the "Arizona Youth Survey: State Report," Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, 2012.

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