

Our View: \$40M from pot for schools? It's a lie

The Republic Editorial board

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Our View: Marijuana legalization advocates print a check that no bank will ever accept.

Editor's note: A previous version of this editorial misstated how much revenue Colorado's legal pot initiative generated.

How not to launch a campaign: with a lie.

Yet that's what one set of advocates for legalized marijuana did this week. They staged an elaborate event on the state Capitol lawn to claim that taxing marijuana sales would pump \$40 million into education.

They even had a massive check made out to "Arizona Schools" for that amount. (Here's hoping no one was puffing enough to try to deposit that thing.)

The campaign's chairman, J.P. Holyoak, asserted that legalizing marijuana would be "for the benefit of education and public-health care."

What bunk.

That \$40 million figure is pulled out of thin air. It is belied by the experience of states that jumped into this ill-begotten experiment. The Colorado initiative that legalized pot, for instance, promises the first \$40 million each year will help pay for school construction. The tax generated \$13.3 million last year. Receipts are coming in faster this year, but not enough to reach \$40 million.

That won't go very far. It might be enough to build one high school and start a second. It could buy a few roof replacements, a few boilers.

There's an honest debate to be had about the benefits and dangers of legalizing recreational marijuana. We believe the dangers of making pot more available to children outweigh the benefits of taking the market away from cartels, but others may disagree. That's the honest debate.

Maybe the advocates don't think they can win that one. So they claim they're doing this for education and trot out an outlandish figure.

Saying a pot tax will help schools may be smart politics. Voters want to support the schools, so tug at the heart strings.

But saying it doesn't make it real. It's not smart campaigning to come out of the starting gate with fake numbers so easily dismantled.

Legalized marijuana will do no more for education than pulling a few coins out of the sofa cushions. It's a lie to suggest anything else.