

# Marijuana Harmless? Think Again

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## TOP PROSECUTORS CALL ON ARIZONA LEADERS TO OPPOSE LEGAL MARIJUANA

*One in six Arizona 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who use marijuana obtains their drugs from someone with a medical marijuana card.*

Arizona's top prosecutors are calling for political and civic leaders to oppose the legalization of marijuana for recreational use.

In September, the Washington D.C. based Marijuana Policy Project filed paperwork in Arizona to begin fundraising for a marijuana legalization ballot measure for 2016.

The number of Arizona's students who use illicit marijuana by getting it from someone with a medical marijuana card is on the rise, according to the latest results of the Arizona Youth Survey.

Among youth users, one in six Arizona high school 12<sup>th</sup> graders (17.7 %) now obtains their illicit marijuana from a cardholder, a jump of 18.8% from the last survey in 2012.

One in ten 8<sup>th</sup> graders (10.9%) and one in eight 10<sup>th</sup> graders (13.4%) who use marijuana also report getting their drugs from someone with a medical marijuana card. The number of 8<sup>th</sup> grade marijuana users now securing their illicit drugs from cardholders has increased a dramatic 28.2% from 2012.

Following this news, County Attorneys Sheila Polk, Bill Montgomery and Barbara LaWall have joined voices to demand that Arizona act now to protect our children. Polk, Montgomery and LaWall are asking state leaders to stand on the side of decreasing drug use among youth, not on the side that creates an environment that has been shown to increase drug use among youth.

"The Marijuana Policy Project poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into Arizona in 2010 to pass the Medical Marijuana Act. They promised us they would keep pot out of the hands of our kids. They have broken their promise here and in every single state where they promote their agenda," said Sheila Polk, Yavapai County Attorney. "Now they are coming back with more false promises."

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### **About Marijuana Harmless? Think Again!**

*Marijuana Harmless? Think Again!* is a nonpartisan alliance of concerned citizens, business professionals and community leaders who are committed to raising awareness about the harms of marijuana. Marijuana is an addictive substance that affects the brain, especially in kids, in ways that impair intelligence, reasoning, judgment and clarity of thought. The legalization of marijuana in Arizona would result in an additional 32,000 high school students being more likely to use the drug putting them at risk in school and in life.

Polk continued, “Until there is a failsafe way to keep marijuana away from our youth, the thought of legalization in any form should not be entertained.”

States with medical marijuana make up the top ten states for illicit use of marijuana by youth ages 12 to 17, according to the University of Michigan’s annual Monitoring the Future survey.

“Use of marijuana by adolescents, whose brain is still developing, is particularly concerning,” said Barbara LaWall, Pima County Attorney. “Marijuana is more potent today than ever before. It is addictive, and it affects the brain, especially in kids, in ways that impair intelligence, reasoning, judgment and clarity of thought.”

A significant long-term study by Dr. Madeline Meier, ASU Department of Psychology, found that early and regular use of marijuana over a long period of time can result in the loss of IQ of 6-8 points. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that 17% of marijuana users who start young will become addicted. In 2009, approximately 61% of persons under age 15 entering drug abuse treatment programs reported marijuana as their primary drug of abuse, according to the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

“Arizona leaders cannot remain silent while the marijuana advocates push their agenda with propaganda and myths,” said Bill Montgomery, Maricopa County Attorney. “Our job is to lead, and to act now to protect our children.”

Two states, Colorado and Washington, have legalized marijuana for recreation. “Keep an eye on Colorado’s experiment,” advises Montgomery. “The 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health tells us use of marijuana by youth in Colorado is 39% higher than the national average; traffic fatalities where the driver tested positive for marijuana increased 100% between 2007 and 2012 [Rocky Mt. HIDTA 2014]; homelessness is rising; and explosions from cooking marijuana to make a high THC content product have dramatically increased. Why would any responsible civic leader want to invite those problems into Arizona?”

A recent and definitive review of two decades of research into use of marijuana demolished the argument that the drug is safe. The analysis, by Professor Wayne Hall, a drugs policy advisor to the World Health Organization, concluded that regular use by adolescents leads to lower academic achievement, long-term mental health problems and addiction.

“It is our duty and obligation to create healthy environments where all children can thrive and succeed,” stated Polk. “Deregulating marijuana for recreational use leads to more access to the drug and more use. I call upon all of Arizona’s leaders to lead, speak out in opposition to the legalization of marijuana for recreational use, and stand up for our kids.”