

THE NORML NEWS

your National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

Bipartisan Bill To Legalize Medical Marijuana Reintroduced In Congress

HR 2087 Grants Leeway To State Legislatures, Would End Bush Administration's Assault On Medical Marijuana Patients

Washington, DC: Republicans Ron Paul (TX) and Dana Rohrabacher (CA), along with Democrats Sam Farr (CA), Barney Frank (MA), Maurice Hinchey (NY), and 25 co-sponsors reintroduced legislation yesterday in Congress to permit the use of medicinal marijuana by seriously ill patients.

HR 2087 seeks to reschedule cannabis under federal law so that physicians may legally prescribe it in states that have recognized its use under state law. It also permits state legislatures that wish to establish medical marijuana distribution systems the legal authority to do so. Eleven states - Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Montana, Nevada, Oregon,

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Drug War Disproportionately Targets Minor Marijuana Offenders, Study Says

Washington, DC: Low level marijuana offenders are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement, comprising more than 80 percent of the grow thin drug arrests since 1990, according to a report released this week by the Sentencing Project in Washington, DC.

"Law enforcement has focused disproportionately on low level possession charges as a result of the nation's lack of a thoughtful strategy about how best to address the consequences of marijuana use," the report concluded. "Consequently, police spend a significant amount of time arresting marijuana users, many of whom do not merit being charged in court. This diverts efforts away from more significant criminal activity while having no appreciable impact on marijuana cost, availability, or use."

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More Than 180 Cities, 30 Countries To Hold Cannabis Rallies This Weekend

New York, NY: Marijuana law reform activists in over 180 cities worldwide will hold marches on Saturday, May 7, to call for an end to the criminalization of cannabis.

The annual event, the "Global Marijuana March" (formerly the "Million Marijuana March"), is coordinated by Cures-Not-Wars in New York City. A list of participating cities is available at: <http://www.cures-not-wars.org>

HIV/AIDS Patients Report Subjective Relief from Cannabis, Study Says

London, United Kingdom: Nearly one third of HIV-positive individuals report using cannabis to obtain therapeutic relief, and more than 90 percent of them say that it improves their appetite, muscle pain, and other symptoms, according to the results of an anonymous cross-sectional

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The NORML Monthly Newsletter is an all-volunteer effort to broadcast news, announcements and information about and for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

It is composed of the weekly NORML e-Zine available online at:
http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=3442

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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 HR2087, page 1 > Vermont and Washington - have enacted laws exempting qualified patients who use cannabis medicinally from state criminal penalties.

"It makes no sense at all to have the federal government overriding a vote of the people of a state on what should be criminalized and what shouldn't be criminalized in terms of personal consumption," Rep. Rohrabacher said at a news conference marking the bill's reintroduction.

"The federal government should butt out."

Talk-show host and medicinal cannabis patient Montel Williams, who was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1999, joined members of Congress in calling for legal access to medical marijuana. Williams said that he has legal permission to use cannabis in both Canada and the state of California, but could be arrested for medicating himself in the nation's capitol.

"I'm hurting right now. Why? Because I knew I had to come to Washington DC and I can't carry [cannabis] because I know I'd get busted," he said.

HR 2087 co-sponsor Maurice Hinchey said the bill was about "individual choice, health care, and states' rights," and added that he expected to reintroduce a federal amendment in June barring the Justice Department from spending federal dollars to prosecute medicinal cannabis patients and providers in states that allow its use.

NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre urged for Congressional hearings on the bill. "Passage of HR 2087 would remove the threat of federal prosecution of patients who are using cannabis therapeutically in compliance with their state laws, and would effectively get the federal government out of the way of those states that wish to regulate marijuana as a medicine," he said.

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Additional information regarding HR 2087 is available on NORML's website at:

http://capwiz.com/norml2/mail/oneclick_compose/?alertid=7531001

<continued from DRUG WAR, page 1 > Marijuana arrests now constitute nearly half of all drug arrests, the report found. Since 1990, marijuana arrests have increased by 113 percent, while overall arrests decreased 3 percent.

In total, approximately 7.2 million Americans have been arrested on marijuana charges since 1990. However, on average, only 1 of every 18 marijuana arrests results in some type of felony sentence, the report found. "As states continue to struggle under budgetary constraints, the wisdom of making nearly 700,000 marijuana arrests annually, the majority of which will be dismissed or processed as misdemeanors, is called into question," authors wrote.

Overall, approximately \$4 billion is spent annually to arrest, prosecute and incarcerate marijuana offenders, the report estimated. A previous report issued earlier this year by the NORML Foundation, estimated the fiscal costs of marijuana prohibition at more than \$7 billion.

Currently, some 68,500 Americans are either incarcerated or on probation for marijuana violations, the Sentencing Project report determined. Of these, an estimated 11,200 were first time marijuana offenders serving time in state or federal prison.

"Assertions that 'nobody' goes to prison for marijuana are misguided and oversimplify the policy issue," authors wrote. "Law enforcement agencies should categorize enforcement of marijuana possession as a low priority so as to conserve police resources for more serious offenses."

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the Sentencing Project report, "The War on Marijuana: The Transformation of the War on Drugs in the 1990s," is available online at:

<http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/waronmarijuana.pdf>

<continued from HIV / AIDS, page 1 > questionnaire study published in the April issue of the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management.

Of the 523 patients who participated in the study, 143 (27 percent) reported using cannabis for symptom management, including improved appetite (97 percent), muscle pain (94 percent), nausea (93 percent), anxiety (93 percent) and nerve pain (90 percent).

A previous survey of HIV patients in the US found that approximately one in four had reported using medicinal cannabis in the past month, while a similar Canadian survey found that 29 percent of HIV-positive patients used cannabis.

Presently, clinical trials examining the therapeutic potential of cannabinoids in HIV patient populations are ongoing at the University of California Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research.

According to a published study in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine, use of inhaled marijuana demonstrates "no major, short-term harmful effects and possibly some beneficial effects ... in HIV-infected patients taking protease inhibitors."

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the study, "Cannabis use in HIV for pain and other medical symptoms," appears in the April issue of the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management.

think-tank Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW).

"The White House [ONDCP] has morphed into a federal wasteland, throwing taxpayer money toward numerous high-priced drug control programs that have failed to show results," the report concludes.

The report cites the office's \$2 billion National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign as one of the agency's most egregious programs, calling it "an utter failure ... [that] violated federal propaganda laws, did not reduce drug use amongst America's youth, and produced no significant results."

Other independent reviews of the Campaign, including those conducted by the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, have issued similar criticisms, noting that it failed to achieve "its major objective of affecting youth marijuana use, and [it] even showed some evidence of an unfavorable delayed effect ... on youth."

The CAGW study also criticizes the Drug Czar's office for spending taxpayers' dollars to campaign against proposed state legislation to liberalize the medical use of cannabis. The report notes that ONDCP officials lobbied in person against several statewide legislative efforts and spent nearly \$100 million to run anti-marijuana advertisements aimed at influencing voters to reject state ballot initiatives.

"[T]he office continues to waste federal resources to influence the outcome of state ballot initiatives, acting like Big Brother and infringing upon states' rights," it states. "The White House's drug office should use its resources to root out major drug operations in the US instead of creating propaganda-filled news videos and flying across the country on the taxpayers' dime."

NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre added, "With the White House Office of Management and Budget recently rating the Drug Enforcement Administration a 'zero' in the category of 'results/accountability,' and a conservative watchdog group now calling the

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Drug Czar's Office A "Federal Wasteland" That Fails To Show Results, Study Says ONDCP's Anti-Drug Ads, State Lobbying Efforts Cited As Grossly Inappropriate And Ineffective

Washington, DC: The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has wasted more than \$4 billion since fiscal year 1997 on ineffective media advertising, inappropriate efforts to influence state legislation, and deficient anti-drug trafficking programs, according to a report released this week by the non-partisan Washington, DC

<continued from previous page> ONDCP a 'federal wasteland' of inefficiency, isn't about time for Congress to reevaluate the drug war and, specifically, the Administration's costly and ineffective war on cannabis?"

For more information, please contact Allen St. Pierre, NORML Executive Director, at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the Citizens Against Government Waste report, "Up In Smoke: ONDCP's Wasted Efforts In the War on Drugs," is available online at:
http://www.cagw.org/site/DocServer/Up_in_Smoke.pdf?docID=1081

No Criminal Record For Pot Say Majority Of Canadians, Americans

Washington, DC: Nearly six out of ten American and Canadians support liberalizing penalties for the personal use of marijuana, according to an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted for the Canada Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC.

One thousand Americans and 1,000 Canadians responded to the poll. Among Canadians, 59 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, "The conviction of possession of marijuana should always result in a criminal record." Fifty-seven percent of Americans disagreed with the statement. A previous poll of US attitudes toward marijuana laws performed by Time Magazine and CNN found that an even greater number of Americans disagree with the notion that an adult should serve jailtime for the personal use of cannabis. That poll noted that 72 percent of Americans support fines, but no jail time, for adults who use cannabis recreationally.

"There is a consensus among the North American public that the government's war on marijuana is misguided, ineffective and unnecessarily punitive," said NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre. "The public recognizes that adults who smoke marijuana responsibly are not criminals and they do not want to spend our nation's limited police resources arresting and jailing them and saddling them with a

criminal record."

For more information, please contact Allen St. Pierre, NORML Executive Director, at (202) 483-5500. A synopsis of previous nationwide and state polling data is available on NORML's website at:

http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=4420

Congress To Outlaw "Anti-Drug Testing" Industry

Washington, DC: Members of Congress this week vowed to introduce legislation to prohibit the use and sale of commercial products intended to influence drug test results, such as diuretic teas and chemical adulterants.

"These products ... endanger the public," said Rep. Ed Whitfield (R), Chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, who called this week's hearing. "I can't think of any reason why we'd allow these products in interstate commerce." Presently, 14 states have enacted laws prohibiting the sale of such products. Members of the Committee said they intend to introduce similar federal legislation before the end of the year.

Of the estimated 55 million drug tests performed annually, approximately 90 percent of those are urine tests, which may be influenced by dilution or adding an adulterant to the sample. Over the past decade, numerous commercial businesses have begun selling various products promising to influence drug test results, including herbal teas and substitute urine.

While often referred to as an impairment test, urinalysis cannot detect the presence of parent drugs, and only indicates that a particular substance may have been previously consumed at some unspecified point in time. In the case of cannabis, non-psychoactive marijuana metabolites (compounds produced from chemical changes of a drug in the body) may be detectable in urine for days or even

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<continued from previous page> weeks after past use. As a result, the US Department of Justice affirms that a positive urine test, even when confirmed, "does not indicate ... recency, frequency, or amount of [drug] use; or impairment."

Responding to the proposed Congressional action, NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre said, "It's ironic that Congress is trying to quash legitimates businesses that have successfully emerged in the free market - particularly when the market for this industry is a direct result of politicians' zeal to intrusively search the bodily fluids of tens of millions of law abiding Americans without cause."

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

New Drug Czar Report Relies Primarily On Unpublished Data

Washington, DC: A report released this week by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) purporting to "set the record straight" regarding the number of inmates incarcerated for marijuana-related offenses relies almost entirely on "unpublished estimates" from a 1997 Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) survey.

The report, entitled "Who's Really in Prison for Marijuana," cites "unpublished BJS estimates" on six occasions to imply that few, if any, marijuana offenders are behind bars. However, a similar, published 1997 BJS paper referred to by the ONDCP in its report states that 13 percent of state prisoners and 19 percent of federal prisoners are incarcerated for marijuana offenses. A 1999 NORML report, based on the 1997 BJS data, estimated that one in seven drug prisoners (or 39,188 total inmates, not including those held in county jails) were incarcerated for marijuana offenses.

The ONDCP report did not address FBI data indicating that annual arrests for marijuana offenses have more than doubled in the past decade, peaking at a record high 755,000

arrests in 2003, at the same time that overall criminal arrests have declined. Of those arrested for marijuana offenses, nearly 90 percent are charged with minor possession only, not cultivation or sale. According to a recent analysis of marijuana arrest data by the NORML Foundation, the enforcement of state and local marijuana laws annually costs US taxpayers an estimated \$7.6 billion.

Commenting on the Drug Czar's report, NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre said: "Police have arrested over seven million Americans for marijuana violations since 1990, and now average more than 700,000 arrests per year - primarily for marijuana possession. While not all of those individuals arrested are eventually sentenced to long prison terms, the fact remains that the repercussions of a marijuana arrest alone are significant - including: probation and mandatory drug testing; a criminal record; loss of driving privileges; loss of federal college aid; asset forfeiture; revocation of professional driver's license; loss of certain welfare benefits such as food stamps; removal from public housing; loss of child custody; and loss of employment. In other words, whether or not marijuana offenders ultimately serve time in jail, the fact is that hundreds of thousands of otherwise law-abiding citizens are having their lives needlessly destroyed each year for nothing more than smoking marijuana."

For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre or Paul Armentano of NORML at (202) 483-5500. Full text of NORML's 2005 marijuana arrest report, "Crimes of Indiscretion: Marijuana Arrests in the United States," is available online at: http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=6411

Medical Journals Tout Therapeutic Effects Of Cannabinoids

Washington, DC: Clinical reviews published in the current issues of the journals Nature Reviews Immunology and Trends in Neurosciences tout the ability of cannabinoids and cannabis-derived medications to treat

multiple sclerosis, cancer and numerous other medical conditions. The first clinical review, published by researchers at London's University College, Institute of Neurology, notes that "abundant experimental data ... combined with data from recent trials points to the prospect of cannabis as a medication in the treatment of multiple sclerosis and numerous other medical conditions."

The second clinical review, published by a researcher at the University of South Florida College of Medicine and appearing in the prestigious journal *Nature Reviews Immunology*, notes that cannabinoids have proven immunosuppressive and anti-inflammatory properties and may be useful in the treatment of "chronic inflammatory diseases," as well as various other conditions, including cancer and spasticity.

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the review, "Emerging properties of cannabinoid medicines in management of multiple sclerosis," appears in the May issue of *Trends in Neuroscience*. Full text of the review, "Cannabinoid-based drugs as anti-inflammatory therapeutics," appears in the May issue of *Nature Reviews Immunology*.

Pot Compound Protects Against Alcohol-Induced Brain Damage

Bethesda, MD: Administration of the non-psychoactive cannabinoid cannabidiol (CBD) protects against ethanol-induced neurotoxicity in rats, according to clinical trial data published in the current issue of the journal *Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*.

Researchers at the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) reported that the co-administration of CBD with ethanol reduced alcohol-induced cell death in the hippocampus and entorhinal cortex of the brain in a dose-dependent manner by up to 60 percent. "This study provides the first demonstration of CBD as an in vivo neuroprotectant ... in preventing binge ethanol-induced brain injury," authors wrote.

Researchers hypothesized that CBD is neuroprotective because it possesses anti-oxidant properties. Anti-oxidants, such as vitamin C and vitamin E, are believed to help the body protect against the deleterious effects of free radicals (unstable atoms that can damage cells and may accelerate the progression of cancer and age-related diseases).

Previous research performed by NIMH researchers demonstrated that both THC and CBD protect rat brain cells against glutamate toxicity (a neurochemical that is released at toxic levels during a stroke or severe head trauma). An Italian research team has also demonstrated CBD to protect against the brain damage caused by ischemia (a reduction of blood flow to the brain that can cause cell death).

Researchers have also noted that CBD and THC can induce tumor regression, including brain cancer, in rodents and human cells. US federal law prohibits the medical use of cannabinoids except for synthetic THC.

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the study, "Comparison of cannabidiol, antioxidants and diuretics in reversing binge ethanol-induced neurotoxicity," appears in the May issue of the journal *Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*.

UK To Fund Three-Year Study On Role Of THC In MS Treatment

Plymouth, United Kingdom: Britain's Medical Research Council (MRC) has agreed to fund a three-year clinical trial to examine the long-term benefits of cannabinoids on multiple sclerosis-related disability.

The trial, which will involve 500 patients, is a follow up to a 2003 study that found MS patients gained significantly greater relief from disabling symptoms after one year of cannabinoid therapy (either oral THC or a cannabis extract) than they did after 15 weeks. <continued next page>



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<continued from previous page> "Currently very few medicines are effective in treating MS and none have been shown to have any effect in the later stages of the disease," said John Zajicek of the Peninsula Medical School at the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, who will oversee the trial. "If [this] study demonstrates that cannabinoids do have a longer term effect on the progression of disability, there are potentially far-reaching implications, not only for the health of people with MS, but also for those with other neurodegenerative conditions."

In addition to symptom management, recent clinical data indicates that cannabinoids may slow down the neurodegenerative processes that lead to MS and similar chronic diseases. A review of this literature appears in the current issue of the Journal of the Neurological Sciences.

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

Dutch Considering Pilot Project To Ban Tourists From Border Coffee Shops

Maastricht, the Netherlands: Non-Dutch citizens will be barred from visiting coffee shops in the southern border town of Maastricht under a pilot scheme designed to cut down on so-called "drug tourism," according to a Reuters News Wire report.

The report cited a Dutch Justice Ministry spokesman, who said that the ban would begin this summer. He did not say whether the pilot program was being considered in other Dutch cities, such as Amsterdam.

Maastricht, which borders Germany and Belgium, attracts more tourists than any Dutch city besides Amsterdam, Reuters reports.

Since 1997, the number of coffee shops in the Netherlands has declined from approximately 1,200 to about 750.

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

Cannabinoids May Play Role In Treating Depression

Newcastle, United Kingdom: Cannabis and cannabinoids may have a role in the treatment of bipolar affective disorder, according to a review published in the May issue of the Journal of Psychopharmacology.

A research team from the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne wrote: "Bipolar affective disorder is often poorly controlled by prescribed drugs. Cannabis use is common in patients with this disorder and anecdotal reports suggest that some patients take it to alleviate symptoms of both mania and depression."

They continued: "The cannabinoids Delta(9)-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) may exert sedative, hypnotic, anxiolytic, antidepressant, antipsychotic and anticonvulsant effects. Pure synthetic cannabinoids, such as Dronabinol and Nabilone and specific plant extracts containing THC, CBD, or a mixture of the two in known concentrations, are available and can be delivered sublingually. Controlled trials of these cannabinoids as adjunctive medication in bipolar disorder are now indicated."

For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Senior Policy Analyst, at (202) 483-5500. Full text of the study, "Cannabinoids in bipolar affective disorder: a review and discussion of their therapeutic potential," appears in the May issue of the Journal of Psychopharmacology.

