



## 2008: The Year In Review – NORML's Top 10 Events That Shaped Marijuana Policy

### #1 Landslide At The Ballot Box: Election Day Voters Reject Bush War Doctrine

Millions of Americans nationwide voted on Election Day for marijuana law reform, approving nine out of ten ballot measures to liberalize penalties on cannabis use and possession. In

Massachusetts, where 65 percent of voters decided to reduce marijuana possession penalties to a \$100 fine, and Michigan, where 63 percent of voters approved legalizing the medical use of cannabis, supporters for pot law reform outnumbered supporters for President-Elect Barack Obama. *Read the full story at:*

[http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7742](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7742).

### #2 Members Of Congress Demand An End To Federal Pot Possession Arrests

Members of Congress convened a Capitol Hill press conference in July to demand lawmakers enact legislation to eliminate the government's authority to arrest and prosecute adults

<continued on page 3 >

### Pot Legalization Question Tops Obama Online Poll President-elect says NO to "legalizing marijuana so that the government can regulate it, tax it, put age limits on it, and create millions of new jobs"

**Washington, DC, USA:** Questions pertaining to the legalization and regulation of cannabis dominated an online poll conducted last week by the website of President-Elect Barack Obama.

According to the Change.gov website, the top question for the incoming administration – as decided by the public – is: "Will you consider legalizing marijuana so that the government can regulate it, tax it, put age limits on it, and create millions of new jobs and create a billion dollar industry right here in the U.S.?"

Change.gov processed over 600,000 votes on more than 7,300 different public policy issues.

<continued on page 4 >

### Oregon Business Leaders Seek Termination of Medical Marijuana Patients' Right to Work, Yet Data Contradicts Workplace Safety Claims

**Portland, OR, USA:** The Associated Oregon Industries are planning a legislative assault on Oregon's 10-year-old medical marijuana law, claiming that medical marijuana patients in the workplace are a safety risk. However, data compiled by Oregon NORML, from Oregon state government workman's compensation and safety records, shows a ten-year decline in workplace safety statistics. The data are published and hyperlinked on the Oregon NORML website.

Harmon, an executive vice president with Hoffman Construction, has been touring the state in his capacity as chair of the Drugfree Workplace Legislative Work Group, giving presentations on their goals for

<continued on page 4 >



## The Willamette Valley NORML News Report

is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit project to record and broadcast news, announcements and information about cannabis law reform.

The W-V-NORML News Report is produced by the Eugene, OREGON chapter of NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

----- Making contact -----

*You can Snail Mail:*

The W-V-NORML Newsletter team by writing to -

**P.O. Box 10957  
Eugene, OR 97440**

*E-mailing:*

newsroom@willamettevalleynorml.org

or phoning: **541-517-0957**

Check 'em out on-line! *visit:*

**WillametteValleyNORML.org**

## 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.

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, and find the one nearest you!

**The NORML 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, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws – is located at 1600 K Street, NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006-2832. Phone (202) 483-5500, Fax: (202) 483-0057 or visit: [www.norml.org](http://www.norml.org)**

Today Willamette Valley NORML joins the fight to reform state and federal marijuana laws, whether by voter initiative or through the elected legislatures. W-V-NORML will serve as an informational resource to media on marijuana-related stories, providing a perspective to offset the [anti-marijuana propaganda](#) from the government; lobby state and federal legislators in support of reform legislation; publish a regular [newsletter](#); host an informative web site; and serve as the umbrella group for a regional network of citizen-activists committed to ending marijuana prohibition and legalizing marijuana.

Along with their parent organization, W-V-NORML will sponsor public advertising campaigns to better educate the public about marijuana and alternatives to current marijuana policy; provide legal assistance and support to victims of the current laws; and promote relevant research.

W-V-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. W-V-NORML also advocates the legalization of [hemp](#) (non-psychoactive marijuana) for industrial use. **To find out more, like how you can help, call, write or visit our website. You'll be glad you did!**

<continued from 2008, page 1 > who possess marijuana. Lawmakers called on colleagues to endorse HR 5843, which sought to remove federal penalties for the possession and non-profit transfer of marijuana by adults. The legislation was the first proposal introduced in Congress in 30 years to eliminate criminal marijuana penalties. *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7670](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7670).*

**#3 California Courts Rule: Medical Pot Statutes Don't Conflict With Federal Anti-Drug Laws** | State provisions allowing for the possession and use of medical marijuana do not conflict with federal anti-drug laws, according to a series of California court rulings. In two separate cases, the California Supreme Court refused to hear challenges to the state's 12-year-old marijuana law – finding that counties are obligated to issue identification cards to qualified patients and that police cannot seize marijuana from state-sanctioned medical pot users. *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7678](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7678).*

**#4: Marijuana "Exceptional" At Reducing MRSA** | The administration of natural plant cannabinoids significantly reduces the spread of drug-resistant bacteria, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (aka MRSA), according to a study published this fall in the *Journal of Natural Products*. MRSA is responsible for over 18,000 hospital-stay deaths each year. *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7687](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7687).*

**#5 Marijuana Arrests For 2007 Reach All-Time High** | Police arrested a record 872,721 Americans for marijuana violations in 2007, the highest annual total ever reported by the FBI. Since 1965, over 20 million Americans have been arrested for violating state or federal marijuana laws. *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7698](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7698).*

**#6 Cannabis Determined To Be Less Harmful Than Alcohol** | The potential health risks associated with cannabis are less than those associated with alcohol and do not justify the continued criminalization of the plant or its users, according to a report published in

October by The Beckley Foundation – an independent British think-tank that analyzes drug use and drug policy. *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7723](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7723).*

**#7 Teen Pot Use Declines In States With Medical Cannabis Laws** | States that have enacted legislation authorizing the use of medical cannabis by qualified patients have not experienced an increase in the drug's use by the general population, according to a comprehensive report issued in June by the Marijuana Policy Project. *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7638](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7638).*

**#8 Medical Marijuana Use Not Associated With Adverse Side Effects** | The medical use of cannabis is not associated with serious negative side effects, according to a meta-analysis published this summer in the journal of the Canadian Medical Association (CMAJ). *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7639](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7639).*

**#9 California Attorney General Issues Guidelines Recognizing Patients' Medical Cannabis Use** | State and local law enforcement should not arrest state qualified patients who possess, cultivate, or travel with medical marijuana, according to guidelines issued in August by the California Attorney General's office. The guidelines also permit for the distribution and non-profit sales of medical cannabis is permitted by qualified "collectives and cooperatives." *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7689](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7689).*

**#10 NORML Daily Audio Stash Gains record Listenership** | The popularity of NORML's podcast grew significantly in 2008, topping more than 110,000 downloads in the month of October alone. Said host Russ Belville, "When it comes to the subject of marijuana, more and more people are turning away from the federal government and away from the mainstream media; instead, they are turning to groups like NORML and the NORML Daily Audio Stash as their most trusted source of information for all things cannabis." *Read the full story at: [http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7744](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7744).*

<continued from POT TOPS POLL, page 1 > Of the top 50 most popular questions submitted to the website, more than a dozen pertained to marijuana law reform – including the legalization of medical marijuana and industrial hemp.

Despite the popular turnout, officials for Obama's website dismissed the most popular question with the following one sentence response: "President-elect Obama is not in favor of the legalization of marijuana."

On a separate website, Change.org, a similar question pertaining to the legalization of marijuana by adults leads in an ongoing online poll. Change.gov is not affiliated with the Obama administration, but intends to submit its top ten questions, as decided by online votes, to President Obama on Inauguration Day.

Commenting on the poll results, NORML Deputy Director Paul Armentano said, "These results affirm the general public's widespread and vociferous support for amending America's antiquated and overly punitive marijuana laws."

Armentano added that he was disappointed with the Obama administration's curt reply. "It was just over a month ago when statewide marijuana law reform initiatives in Massachusetts and Michigan prevailed with more votes than America's soon-to-be 44th President," Armentano said. "It wasn't clear that the incoming administration was paying attention then and it appears that they aren't listening now either. President-elect Obama was chosen by the voters, including those millions of American adults who use cannabis responsibly, to lead on a number of significant issues facing the United States today – not to hide his head in the sand and ignore the will of the electorate."

*For more information, please contact Allen St. Pierre, NORML Executive Director, at (202) 483-5500, or Paul Armentano, NORML Deputy Director, at: paul@norml.org. Additional information on these online polls is available on NORML's blog at: <http://blog.norml.org/>.*

<continued from OREGON BUSINESS, page 1 > the 2009 biennial legislative session. These goals include re-introducing a bill that died last session that would grant employers the right to fire medical marijuana patients for their off-site, after-hours, legal use of cannabis medicine, as well as allowing employers to refuse to hire any medical marijuana patients—regardless of skill, experience, or a clean safety record.

Hoffman is also touting plans to reduce plant and possession limits, to require patients to first use Marinol before attaining a medical marijuana card; to eliminate medical marijuana clinics by requiring only one's bona fide doctor is recommending cannabis; and to require the state to notify an employer if an employee applies for a medical marijuana card.

"Oregon's own state health and safety databases show that Dan Harmon is misleading the people of Oregon," says Russ Belville, Oregon NORML's Associate Director, who pulled together data from Oregon's Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Workman's Compensation Division, and the federal government's National Surveys on Drug Use and Health. "During the ten years that the Oregon Medical Marijuana Act has been in place, the program has grown from 500 patients to over 20,000 now. Yet, workplace fatalities, time-off injuries, non-time-off injuries, DUIDs, and citations for serious OSHA workplace safety violations have all declined in the same ten years."

"Now that doesn't mean medical marijuana patients made the workplaces any safer," Belville concludes, "but if they made the workplace increasingly more dangerous, that's not showing up in these data. Harmon is offering up job discrimination against the disabled as a poor solution in search of a non-existent problem."

In 1998, after Measure 67 (the Oregon Medical Marijuana Act) was approved by voters, there were 3.3 workplace fatalities per 100,000 workers. There were also 3.5 non-fatal injuries, requiring no time off, and 3.4 non-fatal injuries requiring no time off. By 2006,

<continued on next page>

<continued from previous page> those figures had dropped to 2.1, 2.4, and 2.8, respectively. There were 4,446 citations of serious OSHA violations in 1998; in 2005 the number was 4,309. DUI citations, crashes, and fatalities per 1,000 Oregonians dropped from 7.5, 6.5, and 0.16 to 7.0, 5.5, and 0.11, respectively, from 1998 to 2006.

The data, however, may be irrelevant to Harmon. While he cites workplace safety and legal liability as factors in discriminating against medical marijuana patients in the workplace, he and other business leaders in testimony before a House committee in 2007 could not cite one instance where a patient's legal off-site, after-hours use of medical cannabis contributed to any workplace safety incident. Revealing his true intentions, Hoffman was quoted in the Albany Democrat-Herald calling his work a "moral crusade" and that acceptance of medical marijuana "says something about permissiveness in this state, and we've got to stop this permissiveness."

*For more information, please contact Madeline Martinez, Oregon NORML Executive Director, at (503) 239-6110, or Russ Belville, Oregon NORML Associate Director, at (503) 349-0395. Tables and charts of the data from official Oregon and federal databases appears on the "Data" page at Oregon NORML's website, <http://ornorml.org/data>.*

## **Spike In Marijuana Metabolite Levels Not Always Indicative Of Current Pot Use, Study Says**

**Rockville, MD, USA:** Marijuana consumers are likely to experience frequent spikes in their level of detectable metabolites despite having ceased using the drug, according to clinical trial data published in the October edition of the *Journal of Analytical Toxicology*.

Investigators at the National Institutes of Health performed urine screens for the presence of the carboxy-THC metabolite (aka THC-COOH, the most commonly screened for metabolite in workplace drug tests) in 60 adult cannabis users for a period of 30 days. Participants in the study resided in a closed

research unit during the trial period and abstained from any use of cannabis during their stay.

Researchers reported that subjects frequently experienced spikes in the levels of detectable metabolites in their urine despite having abstained from the drug for several days or weeks.

"During the terminal elimination phase, an individual may produce consecutive specimens that test positive, negative, and positive again over time," authors concluded. "This makes it problematic to determine whether positive results are indicative of new drug use or reflective of previous cannabis exposure."

Authors reported that heavy users were more likely than moderate users to have their metabolite levels fluctuate below and above the test's detection cut-offs on consecutive days.

Responding to the study, NORML Deputy Director Paul Armentano said: "This study has major implications for virtually every marijuana consumer, particularly those who are facing drug testing as a requirement of parole or probation."

Armentano said that many probation officers and judges interpret any increase in carboxy-THC levels as *per se* evidence that the defendant has reinitiated their marijuana use and violated the terms of their probation.

"In fact, however, former marijuana users will frequently see their metabolite levels dip and then rise again over time," he said. "This result is simply a result of the complex manner by which the human body eliminates carboxy-THC. These temporary spikes do not prove that a defendant has recently used marijuana, and these results do not warrant revoking one's parole or sending them to jail."

*For more information, please contact Paul Armentano, NORML Deputy Director, at: [paul@norml.org](mailto:paul@norml.org). Full text of the study, "Urinary elimination of 11-nor-9-carboxy-tetrahydrocannabinol in cannabis users during continuously monitored abstinence," appears in the *Journal of Analytical Toxicology*.*

## **NORML Announces Amsterdam Vacation Raffle**

**Washington, DC, USA:** The NORML Foundation has partnered with the charitable giving website Win 4 Charity to offer supporters a six-night round-trip to the world's most cannabis-friendly city, Amsterdam.

The grand prize trip includes round-trip airfare and accommodations for four, and includes bus transportation and free admittance to Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum.

To enter, please visit:  
<http://www.win4charity.com/NORML>.

Proceeds from raffle ticket sales will be used to support the NORML Foundations educational outreach efforts.

Raffle tickets will be available online through March 15, 2009.

*For more information, please visit:*  
[http://norml.org/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=7754](http://norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7754).

## **Marijuana Use Common Among Chronic Pain Patients**

**Baltimore, MD, USA:** Marijuana use is prevalent among patients suffering from chronic pain, many of whom are likely using the drug in order to self-medicate, according to findings published in the *Journal of Analytical Toxicology*.

Investigators at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland analyzed a total of 13,948 urine specimens from patients at 31 pain clinics in six states. A total of 10,922 specimens tested positive for at least one licit or illicit substance. Nine-hundred and sixty-seven samples (8.9 percent) tested positive for the presence of cannabis metabolites.

Authors speculated that the high prevalence of cannabis use within this patient population was likely due to "self-medication," noting that marijuana has been found to possess both analgesic and sleep inducing properties.

Investigators found that the prevalence of cannabis was three-times higher than that of cocaine (the second most commonly identified illicit substance), and that patients typically used pot in combination with opioids.

NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre said that the findings provide further support for legislation legalizing the physician-supervised use of marijuana. "Currently, nearly ten percent of chronic pain patients are violating federal and likely state laws to try and gain some relief from their suffering," he said. "Even more troubling, under cannabis prohibition, many of these same patients are being callously denied access to prescription pain medications, simply because they also use marijuana."

According to case reports compiled by California NORML, a growing number of state-authorized medical marijuana patients are also being denied prescription pain medications because of their medicinal cannabis use.

"Chronic pain patients are being denied essential medications because of outdated and cruel federal restrictions on the use of cannabis, which has been shown to be effective in controlling pain and reducing patient's dependency on dangerous narcotics," California NORML Coordinator Dale Gieringer said. "It is unconscionable to force pain clinics to engage in this sort of pharmaceutical McCarthyism."

*For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre, NORML Executive Director, at (202) 483-5500, or Paul Armentano, NORML Deputy Director, at: [paul@norml.org](mailto:paul@norml.org). Full text of the study "Urine drug testing of chronic pain patients: licit and illicit drug patterns," appears in the October issue of the *Journal of Analytical Toxicology*.*

## Moderate Cannabis Use Not Associated With Delinquent Behavior

**Toulouse, France:** Marijuana use is not an independent predictor of delinquent behavior by young people, according to data to be published in the journal *Addictive Behavior*.

Investigators at the French University de Toulouse-Le Mirail reviewed survey data from 312 high-school seniors. Researchers performed multiple regression analyses to investigate the potential contribution of cannabis use and other confounding variables in delinquent behavior.

Investigators concluded, "Cannabis use was no more a significant independent predictor of delinquent behaviors after adjustments for alcohol use and [other] variables."

Authors did cite an association between heavy marijuana use and delinquency, even after adjusting for other variables.

A 2007 study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* reported that cannabis use among young people was not associated with poor academic performance or deviant behavior. "Compared with abstainers, [marijuana users] are more socially driven and do not seem to have psychosocial problems at a higher rate," the study found.

Responding to the new report, NORML Deputy Director Paul Armentano said, "The moderate use of marijuana, even by young people, is not associated with delinquent, violent, or other anti-social behaviors. This finding was first reported in 1972 by the U.S. Shafer Commission, which concluded,

'Marihuana (sic) is not generally viewed by participants in the criminal justice community as a major contributing influence in the commission of delinquent or criminal acts.' This conclusion remains just as applicable today."

*For more information, please contact either Allen St. Pierre, NORML Executive Director, at (202) 483-5500, or Paul Armentano, NORML Deputy Director, at: paul@norml.org. Full text of the forthcoming study, "Cannabis use and delinquent behaviors in high-school students," will appear in Addictive Behaviors.*

---

## Swiss Voters Reject Marijuana Legalization

**Switzerland:** On November 30 a national referendum was held in Switzerland that, if approved, would have totally legalized the possession, sale and cultivation of marijuana. Unfortunately 63% of the voters rejected the proposal.

Unlike the system in place in Holland, in which hundreds of coffee shops are allowed to sell small amounts of marijuana in a gray market, not technically legal but tolerated for decades, the proposal in Switzerland would have permitted marijuana to be sold to adults in supermarkets. The only remaining ban would have been prohibiting advertising, similar to bans on the advertising of alcohol and tobacco in that country.

A second referendum, to make permanent what had been a trial program of providing a clean and safe place for addicts to take government produced heroin, was approved by 68% of the Swiss voters on that same ballot.



News From *your* local affiliate of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

## Study Finds Marijuana Smokers Have Lower Cancer Risk Than Tobacco Smokers

**Washington, D.C., USA:** Marijuana smokers appear to be at a significantly lower risk of developing cancer than tobacco smokers, according to an article by Amanda Chen et al. published in the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* (Sept, 2008).

The authors analyzed existing evidence on the carcinogenicity of marijuana smoke. Although it has long been hypothesized that marijuana smoke might cause cancer because it contains tars with known carcinogenic properties, like tobacco smoke, the authors note that epidemiological studies have so far failed to show a convincing causal relation between marijuana and smoking-related cancers.

The authors statistically re-analyzed previously published data on marijuana smoking and cancer, originally published by Dr. Stephen Sidney of Kaiser-Permanente Medical Care in 1997. They looked at data on 64,833 subjects, including marijuana-only smokers, tobacco-only smokers, marijuana-and-tobacco smokers, and non-smokers, and analyzed their incidence of cancer, including lung, colorectal, prostate, breast, cervix, and tobacco-related cancers. In every case, they found a significantly lower risk of cancer for marijuana-only smokers than tobacco-only smokers.

There was not enough evidence to assess the cancer risk of marijuana smokers relative to non-smokers. While the authors noted there is some evidence to suggest that the cannabinoids

**\* NOTE! The Willamette Valley NORML Public meeting \* Happens every 4th Sat. of the month and will be at h'ERB'S Toasted Subs, 1210 Willamette St, Eugene call: 541.517-0957 -or- visit: <http://WillametteValleyNORML.org>**



*It's One Hell of A Joint!*

Visit - <http://herbstoastedsubs.com/> - and see!

in marijuana may actually suppress cancer, they concluded that more studies are needed to settle the question one way or another. In the meantime, says Dr. Sidney, the conclusions of his original study stand: "marijuana use and cancer were not associated" ("Marijuana use and cancer incidence (California, United States)," *Cancer Causes and Control*, Vol. 8, 1997).

*For more information, please contact Dale Gieringer, California, NORML Director, or Paul Armentano, NORML Deputy Director. Full text of the study, by Amanda L.C. Chen et al., "Hypothesizing that Marijuana Smokers are at a Significantly Lower Risk of Carcinogenicity Relative to Tobacco-Non-Marijuana Smokers: Evidenced Based on Statistical Reevaluation of Current Literature," appears in the Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, Sept 2008. Dale Gieringer - California NORML, (415) 563- 5858 - [www.canorml.org](http://www.canorml.org).*

**\* THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY ( W-V ) NORML NEWS REPORT > \* P.O. Box 10957, EUGENE, OREGON, 97440 \* PH: (541) 517-0957 \* EMAIL: [newsroom@willamettevalleynorml.org](mailto:newsroom@willamettevalleynorml.org) \* OR VISIT: [www.WillametteValleyNORML.org](http://www.WillametteValleyNORML.org)**