



Regulating Marijuana Improves Public Safety

Many prohibitionists predicted that Washington and Colorado would experience serious public safety problems when voters approved initiatives to regulate marijuana similarly to alcohol in November 2012. Several years later, those predictions have not come to pass, and nine more states have followed suit. Many law enforcement officials and regulators believe that things are going quite well. Adults have already spent billions of dollars buying marijuana from licensed retail stores instead of from illicit drug dealers, and limited law enforcement resources are now being directed toward serious crimes.

“Our state’s efforts to regulate the sale of marijuana are succeeding. A few years ago, the illegal trafficking of marijuana lined the pockets of criminals everywhere. Now, in our state, illegal trafficking activity is being displaced by a closely regulated marijuana industry that pays hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes. This frees up significant law enforcement resources to protect our communities in other, more pressing ways.”

— Washington State Gov. Jay Inslee and Attorney General Bob Ferguson

“We spent the largest amount of our tax revenue on youth prevention, and I think we've seen the results of that. Over the last couple of years, we've seen statistically significant decreases in teenage consumption. The black market is much smaller, and our legal market is big. That's how you get rid of a black market.”

— Former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper

“I think that was another worry, that there would be crime-ridden streets and everything would be incredibly dangerous. We're not seeing any of that.”

— Andrew Freedman, former director of Colorado’s Office of Marijuana Coordination

“Anarchy does not reign in Colorado because of marijuana legalization. The streets are orderly and peaceful. Hundreds of successful small businesses that employ thousands have been created through this new industry. The marijuana business, like any other adult consensual activity, is infinitely better as a legal enterprise rather than as a criminal offense.”

— Prosecutor Jay Fisher, Colorado

“From a law enforcement and criminal justice reform perspective the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, both medical and adult use, has had a positive impact on the lives of citizens living in Colorado, as well as reducing the overall burden on law enforcement and our criminal justice system. In Colorado the total number of marijuana court cases fell from 39,027 in 2011 to only 2,036 cases in 2014. These individuals who were NOT arrested for marijuana offenses represent 36,991 human lives and families that won't be affected by the negative stigma and financial burden that a marijuana arrest can have. It allows these otherwise law-abiding Coloradoans to remain productive members of society, contributing their worth to the greater good of the state.”

— Former Correctional Officer, Former Sheriff's Deputy Carrie Roberts, Colorado

“From a crime standpoint, there was nothing to enforce anymore and the sky didn't fall. It was business as usual and no big deal.”

— King County, Washington Sheriff John Urquhart