



Connecticut: Regulation Works!

Taxing and regulating cannabis creates economic growth and millions in taxes. The state of Washington generated more than \$434 million in cannabis tax revenue in 2018. Adjusted for Connecticut's population, that is \$210 million. Meanwhile, Colorado has issued over 40,000 active licenses to individuals to work directly in the cannabis industry. Cannabis regulation with a focus on equity can create economic growth in communities that have been devastated by the drug war.

Connecticut stands to become an island of prohibition if it does not act. Connecticut residents are already a short drive from cannabis stores in Massachusetts, where voters legalized cannabis in 2016. Legislatures in Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey appear poised to legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis this year. Connecticut has already decriminalized simple possession, but until it legalizes and regulates cannabis under state law, all the economic growth and revenue will flow to neighboring states.

Regulation keeps cannabis sales away from schools. Unlike licensed businesses selling liquor or tobacco, sellers of cannabis are pushed underground and operate virtually anywhere. More than 40% of high schoolers know a peer who sells cannabis in school, while less than 1% have a peer who sells alcohol. Regulating cannabis would move sales into safe, licensed stores where workers check ID. According to the most comprehensive surveys, no state has seen an overall increase in teen marijuana use outside of the confidence interval since adult-use laws passed. Meanwhile, two nationwide surveys showed a modest decrease in teen use since states began legalizing cannabis for adults.

Public education works to address public health concerns. As a result of strict regulations on cigarette sales and advertising, plus a robust public education campaign, cigarette smoking by teens has declined by 84% since 1997.

Prohibition makes control impossible. Prohibition deprives workers and the environment of the legal protections they are entitled to. It also guarantees cannabis won't undergo quality control testing, resulting in possible contamination by hazardous pesticides, bacteria, or the lacing of cannabis with other drugs. Regulated retailers will sell only products that have been lab-tested and labeled for potency.

Regulation would improve the fairness of the criminal justice system. While Connecticut's decriminalization law was an important reform, it is no substitute for regulating cannabis for adults' use. A \$150 fine can be an extreme hardship to low-income residents. Legalization should include robust expungement provisions to stop derailing futures for a substance Americans think should be legal.

Prohibition breeds violence. As with alcohol prohibition in the 1920s, since drug-related disputes can't be solved lawfully, violence is inevitable. As a result, cannabis users and sellers are vulnerable to assaults due to prohibition. In a regulated system, cannabis will be produced and sold by legitimate, taxpaying businesses instead of drug cartels and criminals.

Regulation can free up resources so police can focus on more serious crimes and also help improve police/ community relationships. In the U.S. in 2017, less than 46% of violent crimes and 17.6% of property crimes were cleared, according to FBI data. Data published in *Police Quarterly* showed a higher percentage of some crimes were solved after legalization in both Colorado and Washington. Additionally, a Department of Justice study found that trusting relationships with the local community was one of the most important factors in whether police were effective in solving violent crimes.

Cannabis is safer than alcohol. The Institute of Medicine has found cannabis to be far less addictive than alcohol or tobacco. Unlike alcohol, cannabis has never caused a fatal overdose and is not associated with violent crime and domestic violence. Adults should be able to make the safer choice.

There is overwhelming support for adult-use cannabis legalization. A 2017 poll conducted by the Sacred Heart University and GreatBlue Research found that 71% of Connecticut voters support legalizing cannabis for adults and taxing it to help address the state's budget crisis. Nationwide, an October 2018 Gallup poll found 66% of Americans support making marijuana use legal for adults.