

WTE column of November 27, 2015: “Do your homework on hemp” CST of November 29: “One in an army of ‘circulators’”

As a farm-land owner in need of a sustainable crop, I have repeatedly lobbied Wyoming legislators, urging regulations that would allow hemp farming. Today my concern includes medical cannabis.

Hence, I have become one in an army of “circulators” who collect signatures on behalf of Wyoming NORML. Our goal: A measure on next year’s ballot that would allow voters to decide on hemp cultivation and dispensation of medical cannabis.

Why am I endorsing this cause?

The reasons are several. First and foremost, I enjoy reading. Today’s readers are fortunate to have improved access to accurate information pertaining to public issues. As a result, ever-growing numbers of reform opponents are reconsidering their stance. Sanjay Gupta, who is the medical correspondent for CNN and one of the most trusted people in America, has acted to revise his views. In 2013, Dr. Gupta issued a full apology for his contribution to the misinformation campaign.

Here are additional facts:

1. I am horrified just how racist and unenlightened American drug policies are. Recent books on incarceration of minorities make the situation painfully clear: “The New Jim Crow,” “Inferno,” and others. And here is Steve DeAngelo: “Only 18 percent of the massive increase in drug arrests since 1990 was for hard drugs like heroin and meth, and a tiny fraction for manufactured drugs like Oxycontin—which are responsible for thousands of deaths every year,” he writes, citing references; “almost four out of five drug arrests were for (simple possession of) cannabis.” African-American men are four times as likely to be arrested for possession than whites, and they are eight times as likely to have served time in prison.
2. I learned how unjust it is to withhold affordable medical treatment from patients who suffer from, e.g., glaucoma. The government knows full well that the condition responds to cannabis treatment—at one point, its INDS program furnished 29 glaucoma patients with joints of government-grown cannabis. See “The Emperor Wears no Clothes,” “Smoke Signals,” and the recent, “The Cannabis Manifesto: A New Paradigm for Wellness.” Mr. DeAngelo advocates cannabis regulation as wellness product. “Choose cannabis for wellness, not intoxication,” is his motto. “Cannabis has always been a medicine; it should never have been made illegal.”
3. While law enforcement organizations’ official stance is an uncompromising “No,” their rank-and-file often join Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) as they gain first-hand knowledge of the damage done by prohibition. Sixty-six percent of current and former police officers told “Law Officer” magazine they support legalization, decriminalization, or medical cannabis.
4. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) deviousness and lies began when President Reagan initiated an enormously futile and wasteful War on Drugs—which was used mostly against cannabis consumers. As Dr. Gupta points out, “Americans have been subjected to a seventy-year campaign of deception about cannabis, sponsored by government officials.”
5. Cannabis is not harmful but prohibition is. Prohibition enables criminals to move in and profit—at taxpayers’ expense—“it adds up to a least \$22.5 billion year,” writes Mr.

DeAngelo, citing references and documenting that most cannabis profits go to cartels. Today, with the War on Dugs more than thirty years old, more Americans than ever consume cannabis, with prices artificially high through underground sales.

6. Dependency on prescription medication has soared. “The surge in cannabis arrests during the drug war has been accompanied by a massive rise in the abuse of prescription drugs like opioids, sedatives, and stimulants. A whopping 48 million people now use them for non-medical purposes,” writes Mr. DeAngelo, citing references. Every year, he documents, sixteen thousand people die from prescription painkiller overdoses. Alcohol dependency is an even bigger problem—half of all adults have a family history of problem drinking.
7. When a state like California abandons prohibition and tries to test and regulate medical cannabis, the DEA has interfered, raiding people’s homes, destroying property, and throwing people in jail who were acting in accordance with state law. These maneuvers have caused tragedy in countless lives, particularly among people of color who cannot afford a lawyer. They rot in jail, sometimes for months, only to be released without being charged. Meanwhile their families have disintegrated, their jobs have vanished, their finances are in ruins, their children forced to live in the streets. Some of Mr. DeAngelo’s employees of color have suffered these extremes.

The above information shows cannabis prohibition to be outdated and racist. It must be reversed. Many readers support this stance, signing my petition or that of another circulator. To reach our goal, by early February we must have collected 25,000 valid signatures—25,000 names of people registered to vote in Wyoming—to submit to the Secretary of State for verification. If all goes as anticipated, the measure will appear on the November 2016 ballot.

Wyoming NORML provides contact information on circulators like me.