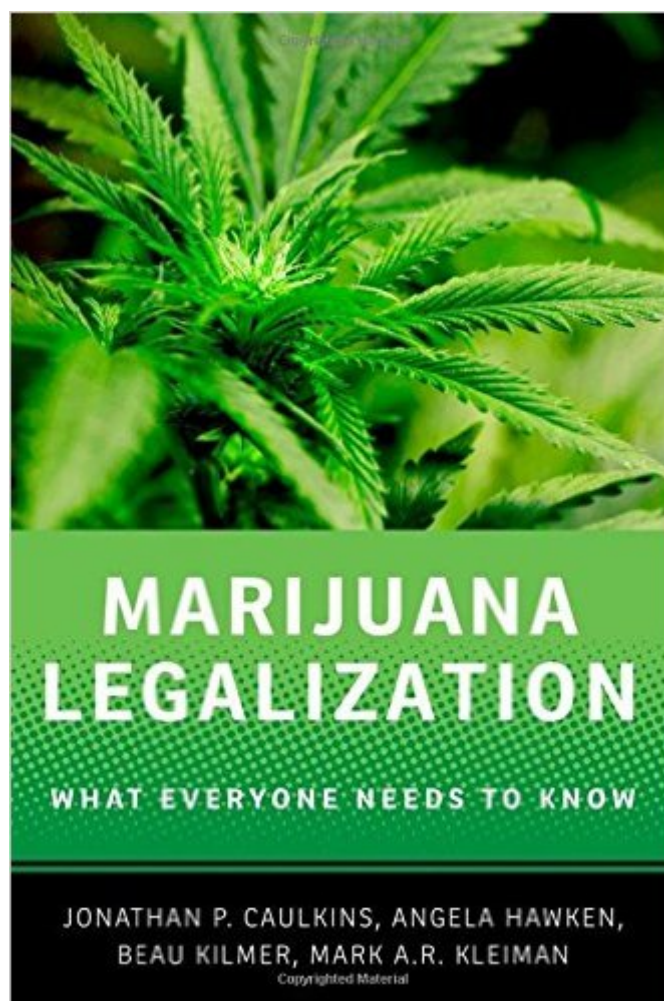


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Marijuana Legalization: What Everyone Needs To Know®



Synopsis

Should marijuana be legalized? The latest Gallup poll reports that exactly half of Americans say "yes"; opinion couldn't be more evenly divided. Marijuana is forbidden by international treaties and by national and local laws across the globe. But those laws are under challenge in several countries. In the U.S., there is no short-term prospect for changes in federal law, but sixteen states allow medical use and recent initiatives to legalize production and non-medical use garnered more than 40% support in four states. California's Proposition 19 nearly passed in 2010, and multiple states are expected to consider similar measures in the years to come. The debate and media coverage surrounding Proposition 19 reflected profound confusion, both about the current state of the world and about the likely effects of changes in the law. In addition, not all supporters of "legalization" agree on what it is they want to legalize: Just using marijuana? Growing it? Selling it? Advertising it? If sales are to be legal, what regulations and taxes should apply? Different forms of legalization might have very different results. *Marijuana Legalization: What Everyone Needs to Know*® will provide readers with a non-partisan primer about the topic, covering everything from the risks and benefits of using marijuana, to describing the current laws around the drug in the U.S. and abroad. The authors discuss the likely costs and benefits of legalization at the state and national levels and walk readers through the "middle ground" of policy options between prohibition and commercialized production. The authors also consider how marijuana legalization could personally impact parents, heavy users, medical users, drug traffickers, and employers. *What Everyone Needs to Know*® is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

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Customer Reviews

With nearly universal agreement that the War on Drugs has done more to spur the illicit drug trade than to stop it (even the current Drug Czar concedes the point), now comes the idea of marijuana legalization. 74% of Americans support its use as medicine. To date 17 states have made it legal for that purpose. Can the Feds be far behind? Four scholars with a background in drug policy analysis at the RAND Corporation now weigh in on the question. One could not ask for a more balanced and clear treatment of the controversy. For readers in a hurry let me reveal that three support legal weed, and one doesn't. But you'd miss a great deal if you didn't read more. Making something illegal that a lot of people want puts a smile on the faces of criminals the world over. Drug policy is the largest reason there exists a 600 billion dollar a year drug trade. It is the reason the U.S. has the world's largest prison system. It also makes criminals out of millions of otherwise law abiding citizens who smoke marijuana. Despite the trillion dollars spent in the War on Drugs over the last forty years, and the 750,000 marijuana arrests each year in the US, the majority of American high schoolers still report that weed is "easy to get." Half of the seniors used it in 2011. No wonder. The cost for weed use comes in at less than a dollar per stoned hour, a lot cheaper than the ticket to see The Dark Knight. Weed is, well, a weed. It's easy to grow. A small house with grow lights can yield a retail crop of \$2.5 million. In the U.S. economists estimate that weed production is in the top 15 of cash crops, on par with potatoes and grapes. If marijuana use occurs de facto, why not end its prohibition? Not so fast, say the authors. Making weed legal is likely to increase the numbers of people dependent on it. It accounts for the second highest number of drug treatment admissions. 90% of all weed use starts by the age of 21, and evidence shows it's more harmful to the young. Our legal intoxicants, alcohol and tobacco, now cause incalculable harm. Big tobacco and liquor have shamelessly marketed to the young. Is there anyone who believes that commercial weed producers would act any better? Cold feet in Washington are the norm on this one. But legalization appears to be occurring piece meal, and that may not be such a bad thing. These authors note, "Legalization is the opposite of prohibition. It avoids the costs of prohibition- loss of liberty, criminal enterprise, and the need for reinforcement- at the risk of increased drug abuse." In the end, it is also more honest. The claim that marijuana is medicine is largely unproven, but legalization would make it less of a battle cry and more of an interest to pharmacologists. Marijuana sales would provide tax revenues. Drug cartels would lose the weed market (but cocaine or heroin sales would still keep

them in business). Drug arrests would be cut in half. Probationers and parolees would stop being returned to prison simply for smoking weed. Because persons of color are arrested for weed seven times more than whites, despite no greater use, this form of racism would vanish. As the authors note, "letting people do more of what they like doing, at lower cost and with fewer risks, fears, and penalties- ought to count, by all the canons of ordinary economic reasoning, as potential benefits of making marijuana legally available." But legalization would still be a social experiment writ large. How many more drug dependent people would it create? Would addicts of other drugs "trade down" to a legal substitute? Could we change the focus of the War on Drugs from one of cops and crops to one of prevention and treatment? Caulkins et al. agree that permissive alcohol and tobacco laws alongside marijuana prohibition make no sense. But the authors are not street drug cowboys. The three authors supporting legal weed are unified in doing it with our eyes open. That means keeping tabs on the costs and benefits. Legalizing state by state has something to offer here, if simply because they can be compared to those where the drug is still illegal. Among the book's many good ideas is that any legalization law should have a sunset provision- a point in time when the law stops, and we all take a hard look at whether we are moving in the right direction. To date the controversy over legal marijuana is a clash of ignorant armies. In California where it is available by prescription, the record is more Moliere than medicine. Store fronts run by grasping doctors sell letters justifying medicinal weed to anyone with a credit card. One study of 4,000 "patients" seeking medical marijuana found that they tended to be males aged 32 who had started weed as teens and had fewer disabilities than the national average. A second study found few patients were diagnosed with diseases which weed is said to help, such as neuropathic pain and AIDS. Does it work? We don't know. In place of clinical trials, weed advocates have claimed it does by a show of hands. This may be smart politics, but it's not medical science. In the meantime, any kid in America can find a joint, but the Federal government continues to keep marijuana out of the hands of researchers who could give us better answers. This book provides a good antidote for the overly zealous on both sides. Henry David Abraham, M.D.

I am from the camp that thinks cannabis should be legalized, taxed, and regulated like alcohol. While I love reading anything that promotes legalization of cannabis, this book was a breath of fresh air on the subject. It is written in a perspective that looks at all sides of the subject, not just pounding out a message that cannabis should be legal because of this and that reason. Throughout the book it speaks on points that promote legalization, and then immediately counters on the same point with what might be drawbacks if cannabis were legal. This was an excellent read in my opinion if

one is interested in learning more about the subject.

This book is thought provoking. It made me think of angles to the legalization debate I have never thought of. Most of this book is based on good solid data. However the aim of this book is to take the undecided on the subject of legalization and guide them, ever so gently away from the solid data, to persuade them that legalization will do more harm than good. Marijuana does not fit the clinical definition of addiction. So, in 1984 Orwellian fashion, they redefine it to mean dependent. It didn't take me many chapters to figure out the anti-legalization thrust of this book. What sealed the deal for me, was when they stated as fact, that CBD is a psychoactive (chemical) like THC. This was their first LIE. CBD does not alter consciousness. The authors asserts opinions, sprinkles in a little fact, then asserts their opinions as facts. It is rarely a pro con argument. They rarely take an argument, and then argue against it, in debate fashion. Although they often admit there is no way of knowing some things, much of this book is speculation on things they admit is impossible to know. If you don't know much about the legalization debate, this book can be misleading. If you are well versed on this subject and know a little about logic, this book can be thought provoking and annoying. The next generation of reefer madness propagandists may use this book to further their empire. What I think about legalization, I believe the majority of us want a moral and just society to live in. Cannabis is more healthy and is more likely to promote social harmony than alcohol and tobacco. I believe many people will quit the more harmful and addictive drugs alcohol and tobacco and switch to cannabis. Legal cannabis will be cheaper than alcohol; is not a logical argument that a significant percentage of the population would rush out and abuse it to the detriment of themselves and the greater society. In fact, I have faith in human nature. I believe if marijuana was legal, many people would quit dangerous and addictive drugs in favor of a more healthy choice. P.S. I think, advertising and promoting the use of alcohol and tobacco is a detriment to society. In all fairness, cannabis should not be advertised or promoted through mass media either. Also, quality controls should be placed on retail cannabis to insure consumer safety.

In some ways I am not sure how to review this book. It reads more like a very critical piece with much discussion of addiction/dependence which the authors weave into most topics. While not addictive, a few people, especially young people, can certainly become dependent but it seemed to me cannabis dependence is over stated. I think one thing of value here is an honest discussion of some claims about the economics of legalization. However, having said that, I also think the authors give short shrift to hemp. The extrapolate from current use which does not strike me as valid. If

hemp was legal, I believe many more uses as well as the economies of scale would result in a healthy, environmentally friendly industry. I recommend that those who advocate legalization as I do, should read this book so as to help keep their discussions more factual. If this review seems to vacillate between positive and negative it is because does but that's the value of the book.

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