

## Commentary

November 15, 2010

### *2010 Midterm Election Results Oppose Marijuana: California Residents Say No to Marijuana Legalization; Medical Marijuana Remains Point of Contention*

The mid-term November 2010 elections in California gained nationwide attention when voters killed the Regulate, Control & Tax Cannabis Act, better known as Proposition 19. Proposition 19 which sought to legalize the possession, cultivation, sale and transportation of marijuana by adults ages 21 and older lost 54% to 46%. Predictably, the defeat of this ballot initiative has not deterred the campaign to legalize marijuana in California where supporters already have set their sights on 2012,<sup>1</sup> interpreting their good showing in this initial effort as a victory.

Over the last ten years, voters in Alaska, Colorado, Nevada and South Dakota have rejected legalization of marijuana. All of these states except South Dakota permit medical marijuana demonstrating that medical marijuana is the first step to marijuana legalization as was true in California. Before the November 2010 election, 14 states and the District of Columbia permit marijuana for “medical” uses.

Medical marijuana initiatives in South Dakota and Oregon were defeated. Measure 13 in South Dakota was opposed by over 63% of voters while a similar measure in 2006 was opposed by 52.3%.<sup>2</sup> Oregon’s Measure 74 which would have expanded the current medical marijuana program to set up state-regulated dispensaries<sup>3</sup> was opposed by 57% of voters.<sup>4</sup> Proposition 203 to bring medical marijuana to Arizona was narrowly passed by 4,341 votes.<sup>5</sup>

For more than two decades the movement to promote more permissive laws dealing with illegal drugs, featuring the elimination of criminal sanctions against their use and sale as well as support for medical marijuana, has consistently lost. Nevertheless, supporters of this approach to drug policy keep coming back encouraged by their occasional successes and by the fact that the media generally play up their victories without mentioning their more frequent losses.

The increasing visibility of drug policy that results from these repeated political battles is an opportunity for greater public education about the value of the nation’s effective bipartisan, balanced and restrictive drug prevention policies. These policies can and should be improved, but the United States is poorly served by encouraging wider use of the currently illegal drugs including marijuana.

For more information about the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. including ways to improve current drug prevention efforts, visit [www.ibhinc.org](http://www.ibhinc.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Leff, L. & Holsen, M. (2010, November 3). Pot activists vow to push legalization in 2010. *Associated Press*. Retrieved November 9, 2010 from

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20101103/ap\\_on\\_re\\_us/us\\_marijuana\\_legalization](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20101103/ap_on_re_us/us_marijuana_legalization)

<sup>2</sup> Verges, J. (2010, November 3). Medical marijuana, cement plant trust fund efforts fail; secret ballots prevail. *Argus Leader*. Retrieved November 9, 2010 from

<http://www.argusleader.com/article/20101103/NEWS/11030330/1001/news>

<sup>3</sup> Lacey, M. (2010, November 3). California rejects marijuana legalization. *New York Times*. Retrieved November 9, 2010 from

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/us/politics/03ballot.html?\\_r=2&scp=3&sq=ballot%20measures&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/us/politics/03ballot.html?_r=2&scp=3&sq=ballot%20measures&st=cse)

<sup>4</sup> Alexander, J. (2010, November 3). Measure 74 defeated: 42% in favor, 57% opposed; Prop 19 also a no-go. Retrieved November 9, 2010 from <http://www.examiner.com/medical-marijuana-dispensaries-in-portland/measure-74-defeated-42-favor-57-opposed-prop-19-also-a-no-go>

<sup>5</sup> Associated Press (2010, November 14). Arizona becomes 15<sup>th</sup> state to approve medical marijuana. *New York Times*. Retrieved November 15, 2010 from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/15/us/politics/15arizona.html>